

Football Premier League: Manchester United 0 Arsenal 1

United wounded by Schmeichel's loss

David Leary at Old Trafford

A FOOTBALL season less for moor, but so much can change in a matter of minutes. For Manchester United, in the space of nine minutes at Old Trafford last Saturday, an exercise in damage limitation became a salvage job.

In the short term United will be less concerned with the consequences of the late goal from Marcel Overmars than the hamstring injury suffered by Peter Schmeichel in his effort to save the game.

The loss of a match United could have, they are, after all, still six points ahead of Arsenal Wenger's team even if Arsenal have three games in hand. But the loss of their talented and tallish Danish goalkeeper for the Champions League quarter-final second leg this week against Monaco is a bitter blow.

This season Alex Ferguson has been convinced that he has a side capable of winning Europe's most prestigious club honour and an United side past Juventus and Feyenoord to qualify for the knockout stage with something to spare, the feeling grew that he might be right. Now, however, Ferguson will be forced to field a patched-up, part-time team against Monaco, who were easily held in a scoreless game in the Louis II Stadium, but have a good away record in the competition.

Thus Ferguson finds himself in precisely the situation he set out to avoid. The Coca-Cola Cup was



Killer blow... Arsenal's Overmars cracks the winner past Schmeichel

PHOTO: SHAWN BOTTLETT

shredded aside with something to spare, the feeling grew that he might be right. Now, however, Ferguson will be forced to field a patched-up, part-time team against Monaco, who were easily held in a scoreless game in the Louis II Stadium, but have a good away record in the competition.

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consequence of United not wanting to take risks with players they would need for the European match. For much of the game Gary Neville, having joined Henning Berg at centre-back in the continued absence of Gary Pallister, had successfully curbed the influence of Dennis Bergkamp through the middle. Then Ronny Johnsen was hurt and irre-

diately replaced by David May, who moved in alongside Berg with Gary Neville switched to other duties. Within a minute Martin Keown's long ball from deep in his own half had caught the United defence off-guard. A header from Bergkamp, another from Nicolas Anelka, and there was Overmars, in space, outside and with plenty of time to nod the ball down and take it on a few paces before beating Schmeichel with a low shot into the far corner of the net.

From an Arsenal point of view this was a logical turn of events. From the outset Overmars had been their most likely match-winner, exploiting John Curran's lack of experience on the left of United's defence and beating Schmeichel on two earlier occasions with shots that drifted just wide of an empty goal.

What followed, from United's standpoint, was totally illogical, given the importance of the next few days. Schmeichel makes a habit, when United are losing with only a few minutes to go, of charging up for corners. His mistake this time, as Ferguson pointed out, was to stay in the Arsenal penalty area in hand by his own goal.

As Bergkamp brought the ball away, Schmeichel stretched to intercept and tore a hamstring. Since United had used up their substitutes, moreover, he was forced to hobble through to the end.

"I don't think this defeat will affect Manchester United against Monaco," Wenger said. "The major blow is not psychological, it's losing Schmeichel." And if Schmeichel is out for five weeks, as Ferguson fears, the wound may fester.

Raimond van der Gouw, United's second choice in goal, was partly responsible for Borussia Dortmund's win in the opening leg of last season's Champions League semi-final. The Dutchman is generally competent but lacks the authority of Schmeichel, which steadies the defence when Pallister is missing. Take away Schmeichel and Pallister against Monaco, and United look vulnerable.

Tennis

Chilean is too hot for Rusedski

Guardian Reporter

GREG RUSEDSKI, the world's fastest server, defied 19 once last Sunday but still lost the ATP Champions Cup final to the flamboyant Marcelo Rios in Indian Wells, California, after a match featuring two tie-breaks, the first going 32 points.

Consolation for the British No 1 came with his doubles partner in the world rankings, gaining fifth spot, after his 6-7, 7-6, 6-4 defeat by the Chilean. Rios's triumph in the Super 9 event, carrying over points, elevated him higher, from seventh to third.

Rios, who lost the Australian Open final to Pete Dinkov in January, was always in charge in this first meeting between the two left-handers after Rusedski's usually potent serve, which had proved him another world record (240kmh) last Saturday, left him down in the opening set, with only 33 per cent of his first serve landing in play.

Rusedski's service was stronger in the second set, which went to a marathon 17-15 tie-break with the Briton clutching the set on his own half point, but he struggled to break Rios's serve and lost the third set on another tie-break (7-4).

In the fourth set Rios was again even with the serve down only six times, and he capitalised on his first match point.

Rusedski had reached the final of the Thomas Muster in straight sets with the aid of his second serve world record in the space of 24 hours. He triumphed 7-6, 6-3 in his semi-final with the Australian after launching the 240kmh serve in the 11th game of the first set.

He beat his own record delivery in the quarter-finals, as Rusedski glanced at the gun as the serve landed and said later: "It felt really good and I had no time to cry."

Martin Hingis took only 65 minutes to defeat Lindsay Davenport in straight sets to win the women's final and the first Cup at the same venue. The world No 1 triumphed 6-3, 6-4 to avenge a defeat by the American in the Pan Pacific final last month.

The 21-year-old Davenport, Hingis's closest rival in the world rankings, had looked poised to win the first set and the Swiss, who successfully defended her Australian Open title in January, took charge early in the second and fourth games. Rios's serve was a double fault and lost the set with a double fault and lost the set with a double fault and lost the set with a double fault.

Vol 158, No 13
Week ending March 29, 1998

UK warned of Saddam anthrax plot

Lucy Ward

PRESIDENT Saddam Hussein has threatened to attack Britain with the lethal toxin anthrax smuggled into the country in duty-free goods, it emerged on Monday.

The threat by the Iraqi leader came to light following the leaking of an all-ports warning issued last week and approved by Tony Blair. The Prime Minister's official spokesman confirmed the document was genuine, but said there was no evidence the plot had been or would be implemented.

The date of the memo confirms that Downing Street still regarded the threat an serious even after the 11th-hour agreement on February 22 to avert United States and British air attacks in the crisis over Iraqi weapons inspections. Britain's Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, it is understood to have been based on information from a source believed to have access to intelligence in Baghdad. There were suggestions that the alert in the memo was a bluff.

It reveals a plot to smuggle large quantities of anthrax into "hostile countries" inside bottles containing liquids, cosmetics, cigarette lighters and perfume sprays. It warns: "Iraq may launch chemical and biological attacks using materials disguised as harmless liquids."

The Government denied that there was cause for alarm. Home Office minister Mike O'Brien said: "There is no specific threat so far as we can gather to Britain. I don't think this is a greater threat than many of the others that have been made."

Anthrax is a micro-organism that can kill within a few days of inhalation and is fatal in 80 per cent of cases.

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He was expected to open talks with the government this week to the test the UN's memorandum of understanding with President Saddam, since it securing unrestricted access for weapons inspectors.

The talks with Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, seek to pave the way for an inspection of Saddam's palaces by a team of experts and diplomats starting on Thursday. And if they want to see the Iraqis' evidence of chemical or biological weapons.

Mr Butler said the UN accord had been holding a promised speedy end to the inspection if the Iraqis open-door policy continued.



The Guardian Weekly



Yeltsin ignites Russia crisis

James Mack in Moscow

AN OBSCURE former shipbuilding engineer, Sergei Kiriyenko, was a heartbeat away from control of a former superpower's nuclear arsenal this week after President Boris Yeltsin cast Russia into political turmoil by appointing him as prime minister.

Mr Yeltsin, a recipient of heart bypass surgery who returned to the Kremlin on Monday after the latest in a long series of illnesses, picked Kiriyenko, aged 38, from the energy minister's desk to become acting prime minister.

Under the Russian constitution, the prime minister takes over an acting head of state for three months if the president is incapacitated or dies.

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But because Mr Kiriyenko's new status has not been confirmed, any failure of Mr Yeltsin's fragile health could lead to a struggle with the rules for the nuclear button and the governance of Russia.

"The president has begun a new constitutional crisis," said one political analyst, Lilia Shevtsova. "Until the new government is approved by parliament we are in a dangerous period."

Mr Chernomyrdin, the stoic, pragmatic, laconic former gas industry chief who over five years as prime minister came to symbolise Russia's resilient economic reforms, took the unexpected blow on the chin. "The hardest, the dirtiest, the most thankless work has, of course, already been done by us," he said. "Now it's necessary to move forward."

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The compensation that Mr Yeltsin offered him — a job campaigning for Yeltsin's allies in future elections — was a message exchange for the eclipse of Mr Chernomyrdin's own presidential ambitions. Mr Yeltsin awarded him the Order of Service to the Fatherland, second class. Asked why he had not been given first class, the presidential press spokesman, Sergei Yastrebinskiy, said: "That's reserved for the president."

Appearing on television, Mr Yeltsin spoke warmly of the prime minister's work but said it was time for fresh faces in the cabinet. "The dismissal of the government does not mean a change of course," he said. "It is an effort to make economic reforms more energetic and effective, to give them a political push, a new impulse."

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He added: "Unfortunately, people don't feel change is for the better. I believe that recently the government has been lacking dynamism and initiative, new outlooks, fresh approaches and ideas. And without this, a powerful breakthrough in the economy is impossible."

Most members of the government, including the young liberal Boris Nemtsov, will keep their portfolios for the time being while Mr Kiriyenko draws up a cabinet.

But two prominent figures lose their jobs: Anatoly Chubais, the deputy prime minister and unpopular architect of Russia's privatisation; and his ideological opposite Anatoly Kulikov, the head of the police force and interior ministry, a key figure in maintaining government control in the face of any threat.

After slaying at the news financial markets in Russia and around the world settled on Mr Yeltsin's successor, Mr Kiriyenko, in the government's course of economic reform.

"There will be no new government programme. There will be a continuity of policy," Mr Kiriyenko said, saying he had heard of his appointment only that morning.

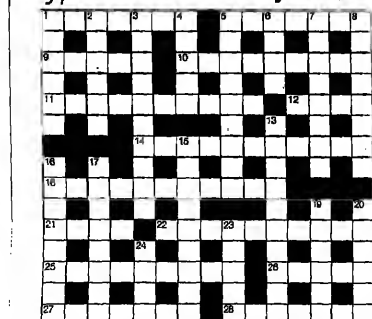
Mr Kiriyenko is an economic liberal and a protégé of Mr Nemtsov. But he may be a transitional figure. The old standard-bearer of Russian liberalism, Grigory Yavlinsky, flew to Moscow on Monday saying that he would lead a new government.

The dismissal of Mr Chernomyrdin, whom Mr Yavlinsky regarded as a corrupt energy baron, was one of Mr Yavlinsky's previous conditions for entering the government.

The Kremlin was talking up Mr Kiriyenko's chances, but his inexperience may count against him. Pragmatic regional leaders such as Yegor Stroyev, Konstantin Titov and Dmitri Ayatkov are likely alternatives.

Comment, page 12

Cryptic crossword by Janus



Across

- 1 Stroke caused by delayed excretion (4,3)
- 5 Decline to run because not up to it? (7)
- 9 Italian type? (5)
- 10 Soldier under compulsion to enjoy actor's text (9)
- 11 Wild tale needing fair share of correction (10)
- 12 Part of church from cheap enjoy (4)
- 14 Freely offered services in Everton crowd? (11)
- 16 No more torch it also tells the time (11)

Down

- 21 Part of register we hear (4)
- 22 Flush around in old car with lawless Australian (10)
- 23 Fleas of insight during lesson? (9)
- 24 Many like it to be the same (5)
- 27 Heart movement last? Well (7)
- 28 Some stockings end like shoes (7)

Last week's solution



1. Stroke caused by delayed excretion (4,3)
5. Decline to run because not up to it? (7)
9. Italian type? (5)
10. Soldier under compulsion to enjoy actor's text (9)
11. Wild tale needing fair share of correction (10)
12. Part of church from cheap enjoy (4)
14. Freely offered services in Everton crowd? (11)
16. No more torch it also tells the time (11)

Suharto's weapons cost the country dear

JOHN AGLONBY outlined the daunting problems facing Indonesia because of the current economic crisis (Indonesia's elite splits defiance, March 15). While much has been written by the Western media on this crisis, there is one important factor that the International Monetary Fund and many journalists are neglecting to address: the vast amount of money that President Suharto and his generals are spending on the military.

The cost of maintaining the Indonesian army in East Timor is reportedly about \$1 million a day. The expenditure to keep troops in West Papua (Irian Jaya) must be even greater, given the large population of indigenous people and the much larger land mass to control. No more is being spent to repress dissenting Indonesians as they struggle to survive the culmination of decades of corruption, brutality and mismanagement.

It seems surprising that the IMF has not sought to limit the massive military expenditure that the dictatorship needs to continue its genocide and crimes against humanity. In the dark ages of economic rationalism, the issue of human rights is not considered important when there are profits to be made — in this case the rioting of East Timor's and West Papua's oil and mineral resources.

If these crimes were being committed in Bosnia Herzegovina, Suharto and his cronies generally would be facing charges of genocide and gross violations of human rights.

The slogan of those concerned about another possible conflict in Iraq is "No blood for oil". In South-east Asia there is much blood being

shed for stolen oil, while the IMF and Western governments fail to tackle the brutal Suharto regime in Indonesia.

*Andrew Alcock,
Forestdale, South Australia*

WHILE the forces of "Truth, Justice and the American way" lie in wait in the Persian Gulf to enforce United Nations resolutions against Iraq, perhaps they could enforce long-standing UN resolutions 242 and 425 demanding Israel's withdrawal from occupied Palestine and neighbouring countries, including Syria's Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

A quick, determined response to the absurd situation devastatingly described in New Zealand and England by Will Hutton, and this month Melbourne has twice seen the serious abuse of civil liberties that this often brings.

At Group 4's brand-new Philip Prison the compulsory customers were provoked into "riot" by the conditions. The Guardian Weekly describes the other: the

Queensland Grand Prix at Albert Park. This great, central, public park was

stolen four years ago without consultation, and is now virtually privatised for four months of the year for commercial profit, mostly tobacco

advertising.

*Noel McLellan,
Melbourne, Australia*

Lights out in Auckland

IT WAS good to hear from Will Hutton again, and on the blackout in my city no less (Darkness at the heart of privatisation, March 15). Yes, the issue of economic rationalisation, but the smokestacks that have been thrown up by all parties to hide this is the real blackout. The prime minister, Jenny Shipley, is calling it an act of god, her coalition partner is targeting the law firm that set up the privatisation,

the one daily newspaper in Auckland blames the blackout, and the privatised company itself (Mercury) is calling for prayers as well as longer hibernations.

It is a remarkable coincidence that ownership of such important utilities, but our government is allied on that too — Mercury is "owned" by its consumers. But the privatisation legislation has manifold ways of maintaining appearances while making sure the reality is private enterprise — with the results that Hutton outlines. Collapse of such utilities just enlarge market opportunities: the companies Mercury was trying to take over are now targeting it, everybody is suing everybody else, and the prime minister is turning a blind eye.

*Steven Webster,
Auckland, New Zealand*

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Briefly

WH TRZASKA claims that students around the world are learning to respect, and not to exploit, the environment (March 1). One might say that the American Apache or Sioux or the Spanish of South and Central America are all good candidates. The Washington Post and the Guardian Weekly are both written in the same language, but within both North America and Britain, as well as in other parts of the world, there are enormous variations in pronunciation and, to some extent, vocabulary and usage. But English speakers can understand each other easily.

The huge demand for English is a large extent generated by the dominance of the United States, but it has also become convenient to use it as an international language. Here in Mozambique, English is a foreign language, but it is commonly used for contacts with other African countries as well as with many other English and non-English speaking parts of the world.

*Barbara Webb,
Maputo, Mozambique*

IT IS consistent, but terrifying, that the major economic powers responsible for most of the destruction of our planet's resources, have already made concrete plans to exploit the newly discovered resources of our nearest neighbour, the Moon.

*(Dr) Charles Douglas,
East Victoria Park, Western Australia*

ACROSS the great divide

NEIL JORDAN still seems to think that the critics of his film Michael Collins were merely carrying out minor details of historical inaccuracy (Slaves of the past, February 22) and did so for political reasons. Nonetheless, any film dealing with such charged political events is bound to be controversial.

The law is that the film tries to deal with the Partition of Ireland in 1922 without mentioning the Protestants and the religious/cultural divide that separates North and South. No one in the film gives voice to the viewpoint of the Protestants of the North and their fears that an independent Ireland would be dominated by Catholics. As a result, Collins is seen to be a Catholic, not because the North had the same right to self-determination as the South, but simply because Lloyd George threatened him with war.

Inevitably then, the film passes over the treaty negotiations because it has no concept of what was being negotiated. Instead, the rivalry between Collins and De Valera is played centre stage, as if their differences were more important than the historical division in the people.

Jordan ignored the real tragedy of Irish history, which is the divide of religion. Within a few years of its inception in 1922 the Irish Free State turned itself into a Catholic state, enforcing Catholic values through legislation — regardless of the opposition of prominent Protestants in the South. Michael Collins, the North's extreme Protestant, with its Orange parades, eulogised politicians and sectarian riots.

The situation today is a direct descendant of Collins' times — the Free State that he helped to create is now trying to shake off Catholic orthodoxy, while the North is still hostile and suspicious. Fanning out on both sides are prepared to murder and maim in the name of their tribe.

A good film will address those issues, allowing the viewer to see the opportunity to pause and consider the awesome nature and potential ramifications of what is being proposed, before our species rushes in to obliterate yet another human wilderness.

*Simon Stanley,
London*

THE Prince Miliuter may decline that "Greenwich is the place where the millennium begins" (March 8) but surely this is the mildest Eurocentric, neocolonialist, imperialistic blather. On January 1, 2000, the day will begin — as it always does — at the international dateline in mid-Pacific.

*Don Higgins,
Torrington, Canada*

YOUR front page headline "A thug's guilt in revolt against Murdoch" (March 8) made me think, whatever has this done? Benjamin Lovell, Wilmington, Delaware, USA

AFTER reading Mary Jay's article (February 1), I am confused. Earl Lovelace did spend years in Tobago a long time ago but he has spent more time in Trinidad where he now lives. The capital of Tobago is Port of Spain is the capital of Trinidad and Tobago.

*Arlene Blad,
Scarborough, Tobago, West Indies*

THE Guardian Weekly

March 29, 1998 Vol 158 No 13

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Annual subscription price is £60 (UK), £65 (Europe), £70 (USA and Canada), £85 (Rest of World).

Letters to the editor should be sent to: The Guardian Weekly, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3AA.

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Le Pen splits French right

Paul Webster in Paris

AN ATTEMPT by Jean-Marie Le Pen to seize control of the National Front failed on Monday as a national outcry at the dangers of extremism tore rightwing parties apart.

Jacques Chirac appealed to conservatives to rally around the president. The Gaullist head of state wants to create a movement to oppose rightwing extremism and provide a balance to the increasingly powerful Socialist-led administration.

Mr Le Pen persuaded five rightwing leaders to ally with the National Front in other regional elections last week, giving his movement its first real taste of shared power.

He demanded a reciprocal exchange: the Gaullists and the centre-right to enable him to govern the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur assembly in Marseille.

But public outrage and presidential anger at opportunist pacts with the extremists obliged conservatives to drop their original plan to back Mr Le Pen, hours before the election of the new chairman.

A Socialist foreign minister, Jean-Pierre Godeaux, was elected chairman.

In the Ile de France assembly covering Paris, the largest of France's 22 regions, another Socialist, Jean-Paul Huchon, won after Gaullist councillors refused an alliance with the National Front.

The voting took place against the background of street protests organised by students and human rights organisations.

In Toulouse the Midi-Pyrénées president, Marc Cenat, was re-elected with National Front backing but immediately resigned. He was the second leader of the Union for French Democracy (UDF) to refuse a deal. Five provincial leaders have been expelled for accepting deals.

The Gaullist mayor of Le Havre, Antoine Rufenach, outgoing chairman in Haute-Normandie, dropped out of the race for chairman because the National Front was in a position to arbitrate.

In the overseas region of La Réunion, a Communist, Paul Vergès, twin brother of the lawyer Jacques Vergès, was elected chairman.

A rethink on the right was inevitable in the wake of the *département* (county council) elections last Sunday, in which the left took more than 400 seats and 11 councils from the right as

Brazil fires threaten Yanomami reserve

Alex Bellon in Roraima

THE small of burning hills fill the air. The sky is a white haze, says the Yanomami man, pointing into the distance, "and we are afraid!" Less than 10km away the jungle is ablaze. Plumes of smoke rise from the jungle canopy, making the normally lush horizon look like a line of factory chimneys. An entire ecosystem is being destroyed, and as the inferno gradually encroaches on the Yanomami reservation it is threatening the world's largest Stone Age tribe.

"We are afraid the animals will leave — the monkeys and deer," says the Yanomami man, whose name, in his native language Ntali, is never revealed outside his tribe. Surrounded by members of his family at the Mucuna river, he adds: "If they go we will have nothing to eat. We will die."

Riders in neighbouring settlements had already started a sacred ceremony, he said, only performed in the face of environmental catastrophe, anointing the hallucinogenic bark of the viola tree and entering a trance.

"We would die here," he said. "But the man who knew the ritual died two years ago. All we can do here is hope for rain."

The primary rainforest has never caught fire before because it is normally too wet, according to environmental experts. But it has not rained for three months, and the for-

est's edges are catching alight from savannah fires which is affecting up to 52,000sq km.

Although specialised firefighters and helicopters have arrived from Argentina, and the Brazilian army has sent reinforcements, the fires are not expected to be extinguished until the arrival of the rains, forecast for mid-April. Surprisingly, Brazil lacks its own airborne fire service and until this week much of the stricken areas were inaccessible.

"We lost control of this thing a long time ago," says the brigade captain Kleber Gomes Cerquinho and.

There are as yet no accurate figures of how much rainforest has been destroyed. Flying over the area, a front of smouldering forest can be seen at least 15km into the Yanomami reservation — only a few kilometres from the settlement on the other side of the Mucuna river. The wind appears to be moving the front deeper into the forest. As far as the eye can see, smoke billows out from under the canopy.

The flames have turned tree leaves and branches an autumnal orange brown. Through the branches one can see that all the vegetation on the ground has been destroyed, leaving a mat of black ash. Occasionally there were glimmers of small flames.

"This is very bad. The fire is burning the base of the trees. A lot are dying, so next year there will be more burning, and it will be worse. You have started a process in Amazonia which will destroy the whole forest," said Professor Philip Peres, director of the independent Institute for Amazonian Research.

In January the fires were already out of control, and the Roraima state government declared a state of emergency. Yet farmers are still burning their land, despite television broadcasts telling them to stop.

This year's savannah fire is believed to be the worst in almost a century. It is the combined result of a dry season prolonged by the El Niño weather phenomenon, strong winds and settlers burning their land. Farmers scorch land to clear it and because the ash is a useful fertiliser.

The government estimates that more than 12,000 cattle have died and 15,000 farmers have been seriously affected.



Boat camp . . . A protest site surrounded by police in demonstrations against the storage of nuclear waste at Ahau on Germany's border with Holland. About 30,000 police were deployed to ensure delivery of waste to the storage site. They vastly outnumbered the protesters.

Swiss bankers wary of role in 'dirty money' war

Harriet Martin in Geneva

THE Swiss banking culture of privacy and confidentiality is under threat from a new law to combat money laundering that aims to redress the country's international reputation for harbouring "dirty money".

The law, which comes into force next month, obliges bankers to inform the Swiss authorities if they have suspicions about the origin of money in clients' accounts.

Carla Del Ponte, the Swiss prosecutor-general, last month told a conference of officials responsible for implementing the law: "There's enormous international pressure on Switzerland to act. At least we can say we're leading the war on dirty money."

Since 1990, when an international code combating money laundering was established, Swiss banks have had a right to inform the authorities of suspicious accounts, but they were not under an obligation to do so.

Now they will be, and the new law extends to financial intermediaries such as money-changers, lawyers and insurers. It also includes an obligation to freeze suspicious accounts.

Many bankers feel uneasy. Michael Wyler, of the Geneva Financial-Centre Foundation, says the law will change Swiss banking culture. "It creates a very different environment. The obligation to denounce is based on suspicion. The banker becomes a conduit of justice, which most bankers believe they should not be."

Mr Wyler says the new law could threaten the bank's relationship with a client. "If a client who's been around for a few years with regular transactions suddenly has a few million dollars, and the banker feels there is something fishy, he is obliged to inform the authorities. He has to freeze the accounts and he cannot tell the client. The banker is in an awkward situation."

Opec seeks to raise prices

Alex Brummer

MINISTERS from the leading oil-producing countries met in Saudi Arabia to agree to cut production in order to shore up the price of crude on the global markets.

Under the terms of the deal Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Mexico announced they would work together to reduce output by up to 2 million barrels a day, according to a statement issued in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The deal appears to patch up Venezuela and Saudi Arabia's differences.

The Saudis have been critical of Venezuela for exceeding production ceilings, thereby exerting downward pressure on prices. The price of oil producing countries' basket of crudes, which it uses to gauge the market, has fallen to \$11.42 a barrel, down from \$18.18 in November, when the cartel increased its ceiling by 10 per cent to 27.5 million barrels a day. A similar fall has hit the European benchmark Brent Crude price — although the price that motivates pay at the pumps has altered little. The sharp fall in the oil price on global markets has contributed to lower inflation among the leading industrial countries and, together with the crisis in Asia, raised concern about global deflation. Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Mexico said that they would coordinate with other members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries and non-Opec members. The three nations pledged to cut production by 1.1 million barrels by next week. However, the cutback was not a formal agreement to reduce Opec's overall output ceiling or the output of individual members.

Saudi Arabia is the largest Opec producer, with a quota of 8.7 million barrels a day. Venezuela's quota is 2.5 million, but it is seeking to raise the largest oversubscribed, pumped 3.5 million barrels a day.

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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 29 1998

Kazakhs pay for Soviet nuclear tests

Claudia McElroy in Alma Ata

GULZHAN SMAGULOVA grew up in the 1960s believing that the "barbarians" which regularly shook her house on Saturday mornings — making the furniture crash and the walls crack — were simply a necessary part of Soviet "victory".

Even when her neighbour bore a severely deformed child, and her own mother died prematurely from a combination of chronic health problems, she did not imagine that as many as 500,000 people in and around her home town Semipalatinsk (Semey), in northeast Kazakhstan, were being exposed to radiation.

Between 1949 and 1989, 470 nuclear tests, 118 of them above ground, were carried out in the region. The consequences of

Now, nine years after the last Semey testing ground and the well of cold-war secrecy was finally lifted, she can scarcely believe how victims of what she calls "a hidden war against our own people". The test site may be silent, but the environmental and health problems are still massive, she said.

Ma Smagulova, a teacher, suffers skin disorders and high blood pressure, which she believes are due to radiation.

The Gorbachev era gave rise to numerous civil and human rights groups, including the Nevada-Semey anti-nuclear movement (named after the main United States and Soviet Union testing sites),

founded by the leading Kazakh poet and politician Olesha Suleimenov. The movement rallied huge public support, leading to the Semey's closure in 1991 by President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan.

Yet in a country struggling to cope with post-Soviet economic collapse, social transformation and abject poverty, the government is more concerned with luring Western oil, gas and mineral companies than with the environmental rehabilitation of one of its remotest regions.

"It is not profitable for the state to advertise the continuing crisis of the nuclear tests," said Yuri Kulda,

a veteran anti-nuclear campaigner and photographer, who has just published a book of harrowing photographs of the continuing suffering in the region.

"Even if the government wants to help it can't afford it, so it has really abandoned hundreds of thousands of people," he said. "Nuclear testing is still going on at Lop Nor in China, not too far from the Kazakhstan border, and just last year I saw the same deformities and radiation sickness there."

Russia, which many blame for the tragedy, has its own economic crisis and is reluctant to help. Few international aid agencies appear to have given much priority to the Semey region, some citing the difficulty of getting accurate health statistics and the country's multitude of socio-economic problems.

Armenia poll under scrutiny

Lawrence Sheets in Yerevan

ARMENIA, stung by charges that the first round of its presidential election was badly flawed, now faces a runoff vote next week that could either salvage or destroy what is left of its once-democratic image.

Already under fire for marred elections in 1995 and 1996, diplomats say the strategic but impoverished country is risking international isolation and cuts in crucial aid from abroad if it does not get its house in order this time.

The contest between the prime minister and acting president, Robert Kocharyan, and Armenia's former leader, Karen Demirchyan, will also be monitored for any impact on the oil-rich but unstable Caspian region.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, listing a catalogue of abuses, said there were many flaws in the first round of voting last week. It said the front-runners eliminated 10 rivals but failed to get the more than 50 per cent of votes required for outright victory.

The OSCE said the two men would have faced a runoff in any case but added that the second vote, expected by analysts to be close, must be free of controversy to get foreign approval.

Mr Kocharyan running neck and neck with a large pool of voters still undecided. Political observers fear Armenia has such a bad record on human elections that a close result will test to worst even if the vote is relatively clean.

A close result will produce a big bang. In 1996, said Arur Bagdasaryan, Armenia's political scientist, "The victory margin needs to be at least 5 per cent to avoid that."

He believed that Mr Kocharyan, whose supporters are accused by foreign monitors of committing most of the abuses, should severely punish those responsible for irregularities or his credibility will suffer.

Observers hesitate to predict the outcome of the runoff. They fear even minor irregularities will call into question a less than clean result, no matter who might commit them. "Regardless of who wins, it will probably be a disaster," he said, "but means bad things for the home, and abroad," a Western diplomat said. — Reuters

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Pope attacks Nigeria over human rights

Alex Duval Smith in Lagos and Geneva

POPE JOHN PAUL II ended his three-day visit to Nigeria on Monday with an appeal to the multi-ethnic African nation to leave behind its divisions and work towards unity and peace.

The Pope said that human dignity and rights were a guiding principle in strengthening democracy, and urged Roman Catholic bishops to speak out for justice and freedom.

"The time is ripe for your nation to gather its material riches and spiritual energies so that everything that causes division may be left behind and replaced by unity, solidarity and peace," the Pope said in his address during the official departure ceremony at Abuja's international airport.

The Vatican gave Nigerian authorities the list of around 60 detainees, drawn up with the help of relatives, human rights groups and foreign governments, that it wants freed. The list is thought to include Moshood Abiola, detained after apparently winning the 1993 elections, and leading opposition and trade union leaders.

"Your prayers, blessing and words of advice will inspire us in the pursuit of genuine national reconciliation," Nigeria's military ruler, General Abdulsalam Abacha, said. "For democracy in Nigeria, reinforcing its human rights message and challenging Nigerians to rid their

society of everything that offends the dignity of the human person or violates human rights."

Addressing at least half a million pilgrims in aggressive least near Oshana in former Biafra, the final 77-year-old pontiff launched a thinly veiled attack on Nigeria's military rulers.

"God has blessed this land and it is everyone's duty to ensure that these resources are used for the good of the whole people," he said in a clear reference to the country's oil wealth, which is exploited by foreign companies for the financial benefit of very few.

"All Nigerians must work towards reconciling differences, overcoming ethnic rivalry, and injecting honesty, efficiency and competence into the art of governing," he said. "There can be no place for intimid-

ation and domination of the poor and the weak, for arbitrary exclusion of individuals and groups from political life, for the misuse of authority or the abuse of power."

"As your nation pursues a peaceful transition to a democratic civilian government, there is a need for all in former Biafra, the final 77-year-old pontiff launched a thinly veiled attack on Nigeria's military rulers.

Gen Abacha has pledged a switch to civilian governance by October. Critics believe that by jailing opposition figures, he has simply paved the way for his own election.

Earlier Gen Abacha had set a combative tone as the country prepared for the Pope's arrival. He accused Europe and the United States of meddling in Nigerian affairs by jailing his critics, he said. At least 30 journalists, lawyers and others critical of the regime were rounded up and jailed.

Lawyers win in a kiss-and-tell world



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

ADD TOGETHER the gross domestic product totals for Senegal, Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda and Botswana — all being visited by Bill Clinton on his journey through Africa this week and next — and you will arrive at a grand total of \$65 billion.

Now pretend that you are an all-powerful benefactor and double this figure, an act which, were it carried out in practice, would transform the lives of the more than 50 million people who live in these five countries. The total is now \$130 billion.

Add another \$43 billion to the pot. You now have, at \$173 billion, the total amount of money that is transferred annually in civil damages suits and legal fees in the United States.

Legal costs will not be far from President Clinton's mind as he travels through Africa, though not because of this shocking, if somewhat arbitrary, comparison. The reason is more personal. Legal costs and penalties have now become one of the determining aspects of Bill and Hillary Clinton's lives. Not just now, but quite probably until the day that they die.

Nobody has managed to compute a figure for the Clintons' private legal costs over the years. All we know is that the amounts are extremely high, and that they massively exceed the Clintons' own

assets and incomes. One recent estimate put the lifetime figure of Clinton's private legal expenses at around \$8 million, a figure that he cannot hope to pay off from his \$200,000-a-year salary as president.

To help to clear his personal debts Clinton will therefore have to rely on his earning power as an author and lecturer after he leaves the White House. The task is probably within his reach. The Clinton memoirs should certainly be worth a million-dollar advance and, as a young ex-president, he will leave office before his 55th birthday. He will have several years of earning potential remaining. Nevertheless, he will live under the shadow of his present legal problems for years to come.

Clinton is also going to have to rely on his proven skills as a fundraiser. At the end of 1997 the Clintons closed down a legal defence fund that they had opened in 1994 and which had brought in \$12.3 million over three and a half years in donations capped at \$1,000. A new defence fund was opened up in February 1998, after the Monica Lewinsky case broke, which allows donations of up to \$10,000 to be made to the president. At the time Clinton was estimated to owe his private lawyers \$3.2 million, most of it in fees to Bob Bennett and David Kendall. These men still have much more work to do and many bills to submit before the Paula Jones and Lewinsky cases are concluded.

Whatever else these cases have done for Clinton, the president knows that he will pay for them, one way or another. But he will only be able to do so because of his earning power and because additional parts of his legal costs are being met from the public, not the private, purse.

This is an area where the line between public and private has become fuzzy. Clinton's right-wing persecutors are already training their inquisitorial eyes on some of these costs, suspecting that public funds are being used for private purposes. Whatever the fruits of that claim — and it applies with at least equal force to the independent



counsel, Kenneth Starr — recent rises in expenditure on the White House counsel's office underline the broader problem. The office costs \$2.4 million annually, accounting for almost 10 per cent of the White House budget, with 24 lawyers now working there, compared with only four in recent years. Yet by comparison with his employees and with others who have become caught up in the case, the Clintons are able to survive tolerably well. They can call on White House lawyers for some of their needs, and they at least have a defence fund to help with the purely private costs.

Lewinsky has no such support. Her lawyer, the ubiquitous William Ginsburg, frequently punts esti-

mates of her costs into the public arena. Figures ranging from \$100,000 to \$250,000 have been mentioned, and these will doubtless climb higher, as Lewinsky has not even gone before the grand jury yet. Ginsburg says he craves a fund like Clinton's, while Monica's father, Bernard Lewinsky, says that he does not have the means to pay for it all — and he is a Beverly Hills doctor.

So, the scale of legal costs almost compels Lewinsky to run to the television studios and the book publishers in the hope of income to pay her bills. The costs of the US legal system not only create a public demand for kiss-and-tell books but also forces people such as Lewinsky

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March 25 1998

Kathleen Willey, whose accusations against Clinton on CBS television last week were by far the most testing for the White House since the Lewinsky affair broke, is no other whose every move is conditioned by her financial obligations.

In her case the problem is made worse by her responsibility for debts incurred by her disbarred husband. Willey's legal costs are approaching six figures, which is why her lawyer was touting her story in publishers for the extravagant sum of \$300,000 recently.

Not everyone in this story can recoup the costs by writing a book. Clinton may be able to do so, as prominent players such as Linda or Lindsy Tipton Jones managed to find the righting Rutherford Institute to take on her case and bear her costs. But what about the president's secretary, Betty Curie? Or his valet, Bayani Nwile? Or his adviser, Sidney Blumenthal? These people cannot seriously expect to produce best-sellers to clear the money that they are compelled to spend on defending themselves.

In a city where lawyers charge more than \$300 an hour for salaries, subpoenas from Starr can mean if not financial ruin, at least financial embarrassment. Paul Begala, one of Clinton's top political advisers who was summoned by Starr, says that he has in effect been fined \$100,000 for doing his job. A lengthening line of others can legitimately make the same complaint.

Meanwhile Starr himself has spent \$30 million — some say \$40 million — from the public purse as he probes and explores a bewildering variety of avenues on his mission. Even if every cent of it is well-spent on matters genuinely requiring investigation, Starr has an advantage that none of the subjects of his inquiries can match. That is bad enough. What is worse is that he is driving a process which, through no fault of his own, forces targets into exactly the sort of actions that are liable to make them the subject of investigations in the first place.

Figures are for 1995, the last year for which comparable data are available

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 25 1998

Caught in the crossfire

Julian Borger in Qiqiq
sees Israeli troops wreck a Palestinian family's home

WITH her husband and eldest son in military detention, Zahur al-Atarah was left to sit among the remnants of her home on Monday and reflect on the vicissitudes of a month under Israeli rule.

At the beginning of March army bulldozers arrived in Qiqiq, her home village, and demolished the family house. It had been built with an Israeli permit. Two weeks later, a group of rabbis made their way up the steep and rocky path the bulldozers had climbed. Watched by journalists, they picked up shovels and helped the family rebuild the foundations of their shattered home.

Last Sunday a sizeable force of soldiers and policemen arrived to confiscate their tools. They heat Mrs Atarah, her husband Yusuf, their son aged 18 and daughter aged 16. Then they arrested them. The family have the ill-fortune to live on a hill overlooking a strategic road between Jewish settlements during the Palestinian West Bank city of Hebron. With every month that goes by without progress in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, the struggle over territory becomes more pitiless. Demolition orders are being over more than 1,000 Palestinian families on the West Bank who live near settlements or roads used by settlers.

Bassam Eid, a civil rights activist

Cook pushes European role

in Black in Damascus

AN UNREPRESENTED Rohu Cook last week underlined European determination to prod Israel towards a comprehensive Middle East settlement when he called for an unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon.

The British Foreign Secretary's remarks in Beirut came in the wake of his stormy visit to Israel and angry accusations by senior Israeli officials that his meeting with a Palestinian official at the disputed Bar Hana settlement in East Jerusalem had breached the terms of the visit.

Some greeted Mr Cook in Syria and Lebanon on the final stage of his Middle East trip. But there were warm words for British and European diplomacy in Damascus and Beirut where both governments seek to promote the long-stalled peace process.

With that aim in mind Mr Cook said he wanted to see the implementation of UN Resolution 425, 20 years old this month. He called for Israel to withdraw from south Lebanon.

"We would also like to see it implemented in the context of a comprehensive settlement which would enable us to move the peace process for all the tracks, not just one track. I wish to make sure that all sides end live to security," Mr Cook said.

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Zahur, Yusuf and their 10 children into tents, insisting they had no other shelter, they began to rebuild.

Peter Lerner, a spokesman for the Israeli civil administration, said: "There is no point in building by-pass roads if they're no longer going to bypass anything." As for the beatings: "When we arrived we intended to confiscate the tools being used to rebuild the house," Mr Lerner said. "Unfortunately, the householders showed some resistance, which led to the arrests that were filmed."

He said the new foundations and outer walls of the Atarah home, built this month, would be demolished. After lawyers intervened last Sunday night, Mrs Atarah and her daughter were released. Mr Atarah was offered freedom if he signed a document promising not to rebuild his house. He refused, and both he

and Hussam were still being held on Monday in a nearby military camp.

"I said we will not build if you can give us a house and have us come live among you," Mrs Atarah said. "They laughed at that."

By Monday evening the Rabbin for Human Rights had returned in solidarity. Arif Ascherman, their head, called the treatment of the family "inhuman — certainly contrary to everything we know in the Jewish tradition". The rabbi, he said, would continue to take part in the reconstruction of the house and stand vigil outside the military jail.

Wedged between two contrary forces in modern Israeli life, the Atarah family have little doubt which is the stronger. Mr Atarah's brother Ahmed said: "The rabbis have words but the soldiers have the guns and all the power."

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Brussels braced for warfare over handouts



Europe this week

Martin Walker

THIS IS an historic month in Europe. On the last day of March, the negotiations with six new applicants to the European Union from central and eastern Europe, and Cyprus, are to begin. This week the European Commission was expected to issue its verdict on countries qualifying for the first wave of the single currency. And last week the Commission published its budget plan for the next seven-year cycle, from 2000 to 2006.

The EU budget currently runs at about \$90 billion a year, which is less than the budget of the state of California, with a population just one-tenth of that in Europe. This modest sum is for a Europe with a combined gross domestic product of close to \$8,000 billion.

The EU budget is financed from three main sources. About 40 per cent comes from its share of value added tax receipts. Another 40 per cent comes from a levy based on the gross domestic product of each member state, and the rest comes from various customs duties.

The money is spent mainly on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which subsidises the price of food, and the Structural Funds, more than 30 per cent. The rest goes on EU research projects, training and education grants, foreign development aid and the rest comes from the various Structural Funds, more than 30 per cent. The rest goes on EU research projects, training and education grants, foreign development aid and the rest comes from the various Structural Funds, more than 30 per cent.

The budget plan for 2000-2006, in which the EU expects to spend almost \$1,000 billion, represents the biggest change in the priorities and spending policies of Brussels since Britain joined Europe 25 years ago. Offering 20 per cent cuts in cereal prices and 30 per cent of the price of beef in its creeping reform of the

CAP, it might seem to be aimed at guaranteeing a cheaper hamburger. Europe's consumers will save on food prices. The average British family can expect to save about \$120 a year. The great CAP reform means a slow and steady, but fundamental, shift away from paying guaranteed high prices for food — since the latest round of the Gatt trade agreements — to direct payments to farmers.

In theory this should allow the EU to subsidise poorer farmers in hill country, such as those in the English Lake District or the French Auvergne, so that they stay on the land and maintain the picturesque aspect of the rural landscape. It should also progressively reduce the subsidies paid to the big ranch-style cereal farms of Britain and France. There will be outrage from the farm lobbies and French warfare in the Brussels bureaucracy, even though the Commission proposes to spend 10 per cent more on the CAP.

The Commission, which for decades watched farm spending bal-

loon and tried to buy public support with lavish "structural" grants, is learning to live within a tightening budget. This discipline began with the 1992 Edinburgh summit, which established a fixed cap that requires spending no more than 1.27 per cent of Europe's GDP.

As a result, Europe's poor regions can expect fewer handouts from Brussels. The EU has begun shifting resources towards the incoming growth of eastern Europe. So the EU is trying to shift from its current generosity, under which 51 per cent of the EU population qualify for Structural Funds, to a leaner system under which only the 35 per cent in the poorest regions qualify.

This is what alarms Northern Ireland and the Scottish Highlands and Islands, who fear that, like parts of Spain, Portugal and Ireland, they will no longer qualify for the most generous "Objective One" Structural Funds. South Yorkshire, however, has been sufficiently hard hit by steel and pit closures to qualify. A region qualifies for Objective One status when its GDP per capita is 75 per cent or less of the EU average.

It is far from clear whether the Structural Funds work. Brussels likes to point to some success stories, such as the northeast of England, and to Ireland, which gets

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 25 1998

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Railtrack bids for Tube deal

Keith Harper

RAILTRACK last week emerged as the strongest contender to take over the London Underground (LU) after the Government announced an extra "patch and mend" £395 million to keep the network intact for two years.

Railtrack said it was in a better position than most to take part in a £7 billion contract to run the network within two years because two-thirds of the Underground's tracks were adjacent to its own. "We have the expertise but we might want a contract longer than the 15 years wanted by the Government," said a spokesman.

Railtrack was responding to a

commitment by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, to enter into partnership with the private sector to refurbish the Underground. Mr Prescott described it as "the third way" between privatisation and nationalisation.

The network has suffered from underfunding by both Labour and the Tories, who slashed £700 million off its budget six months before the last general election.

Mr Prescott hopes there will only be one contractor, but there could be up to three. They will take over financing of the £7 billion project and will not be restrained by annual public expenditure plans.

He did not rule out a continuing subsidy, but said that LU could

break even in the next five years. The private companies will charge LU for access to the network. They will be able to borrow large sums for investment against guaranteed government contracts. When the 15-year contracts run out, they will be returned to public ownership. The companies will be subject to an "agreed performance regime" and to "soft penalties" if services fall below agreed standards.

The scale of the project is vast, and large sections of the system may be closed for long periods for engineering work.

Meanwhile the first move to return the railways to the public sector was proposed last week by an influential committee of MPs,

backed by the Tories. The plan, to which Mr Prescott is likely to give serious consideration for his transport bill in the autumn, suggests that the Government could take an equity share in Railtrack and, where train operating companies are failing, hand the franchise back to British Rail.

The report proposes that British Rail, which still exists as a shell company, could be invited to operate any rail franchise where the operator had failed. The authority would seek tougher quality targets, and impose quick and effective penalties if they were not met. It would make sure that Railtrack kept up its investment programme and administer public subsidies.

Passenger complaints about poor rail standards shot up by a record 155 per cent between October and December last year.

Trade unions fight for rights

Seamus Mallon

THE prospect of outright confrontation between Tony Blair and the trade unions opened up last week after the Transport and General Workers' Union said it would seek an emergency TUC congress to mobilise opposition if Mr Blair's plans for union recognition rights favoured the employers.

The move — spearheaded by the TGWU general secretary, Bill Morris — follows a hastily arranged meeting last week between the Prime Minister and TUC leaders to discuss fears about the forthcoming Fairness at Work white paper.

Although both sides described the discussion as good, in reality, there is concern among union leaders that Mr Blair is preparing to back the Confederation of British Industry against the TUC over how to implement Labour's manifesto commitment to union recognition where more than half a workforce wants it.

The first specially convened congress for more than 20 years, targeted at a key part of the Government's programme, would be likely to become a watershed in relations between Labour and the unions.

Mr Morris said that the white paper would be "fundamental in terms of workers' rights, and judgment should be made by the full TUC, not just the 51 members of the General Council". His union wanted the "recall of congress to determine whether or not the trade union movement can support the Government's proposals".

Some union leaders believe Mr Blair is prepared to water down the union recognition commitment to the point where existing union workplace agreements could be undermined. TUC anxiety has been heightened by Mr Blair's decision to oppose European Union proposals for employee information and consultation at national level.

One crunch issue is whether unions will win the right to be recognised for collective bargaining if they win a majority of those who vote in a workplace ballot — or, as the CBI wants, a majority of those eligible to vote. A third option being considered would be to impose a minimum threshold turnout.

The CBI also wants to exclude all firms with fewer than 50 employees, outlaw industrial action around union recognition disputes and leave it to employers to decide which groups of workers should be balloted.



GEC severs link with disgraced Aitken

David Gwyn

GEC, Britain's largest defence contractor, is to sever its links with Jonathan Aitken, the disgraced former cabinet minister, weeks after giving him a lucrative consultancy on prospective arms sales to the Middle East.

The loss of his first confirmed TUC, not just the 51 members of the General Council. His union wanted the "recall of congress to determine whether or not the trade union movement can support the Government's proposals".

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arrested and questioned for four hours at a London police station in connection with allegations of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice — the day after his daughter, Victoria, and close friend and business associate, Said Ayari, a Saudi Arabian, were arrested in connection with the same allegations.

GEC said: "Jonathan Aitken is not a GEC employee. He is working with us on a short-term project which is almost complete."

The company refused to comment on the nature of the project or analysis said it was almost certainly to report on arms sales

prospect in Saudi Arabia, where GEC's presence is weak.

Mr Aitken's arrest proved deeply embarrassing to GEC, whose Marconi defence equipment and electronics unit had hired him because of his close contacts with the Saudi royal family and extensive knowledge of Middle East arms markets.

Lord Simpson, GEC's managing director, intervened to sever the link with Mr Aitken, aged 55, after being advised that Marconi's initial response — that it was premature to comment on Mr Aitken's position — was damaging the company's reputation.

role as the mastermind behind the Treasury drive to improve public-private financial co-operation — through the Private Finance Initiative — would be deflected away from taxation and focused on helping the mega-ministry of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, to revitalize public transport.

The move would mean demolition or the sack for Gavin Strang, Mr Prescott's No 2 at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions and the object of a whispering campaign by some MPs. Unlike Mr Strang, Mr Robinson would not be in the Cabinet.

Though the Prime Minister is thought to be satisfied with the per-

formance of most of his senior colleagues as the first anniversary of his government approaches — on May 1 — MPs' attention is turning towards a shake-up before the summer recess.

Since the Commons revolt over last year's benefits, persistent speculation at Westminster has predicted the replacement of Harriet Harman as Social Security Secretary by almost certainly by Alistair Darling, Gordon Brown's Blairite deputy at the Treasury.

Some pro-Harman MPs are now saying the Prime Minister should give her another senior post, possibly as minister for women, inside the Cabinet.

ROSALIND Mitchell, the first female cabinet minister to undergo a sex change while holding office, was thrown out of the women's meeting at a Labour group because the women decided she was still a man.

THE LORD Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls have demanded that paedophiles be provided with proper accommodation on their release from prison, to minimise the risk to society and to protect them from being banded by the public.

GREAT Train Robber Ronald Biggs is in "good spirits" despite suffering a stroke that left him unable to speak.

In Brief

TONY BLAIR was rebuffed by a powerful committee of MPs for failing to declare a free visit for himself and his family to the 1998 British Grand Prix.

OXFORD and Cambridge colleges will lose about £12 million of the subsidies supporting their tutorial system for undergraduates under plans to bring the two universities into the mainstream for funding.

JAMES TAYLOR, a consultant surgeon who carried out a heart procedure on a girl of six without the consent of her parents, was suspended for six months after being found guilty of serious professional misconduct. The girl subsequently died.

SUPERMARKETS have been accused of profiteering at the expense of their poorest customers' health by selling cheap unlabelled over-the-counter cigarettes that are higher in tar and nicotine than most well-known makes.

HOSPITALS have been urged to tighten their procedures after a report revealed that patients being given the wrong blood accounted for almost half of all transfusion complications.

INSURANCE premiums for home-owners on the east coast of England could soar after new research revealed increased threat of flooding as a result of global warming.

THE Government declared that it was on the way to plan for Britain's poorer regions by up to £800 million a year.

NEW research into the causes of cot deaths suggests that low oxygen levels at high altitudes and in air-filled cots may put some babies at risk.

ONE in eight sixth-formers on working-class backgrounds say they cannot afford to go to university because of rising costs and the abolition of grants, according to a Morf poll.

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GREAT Train Robber Ronald Biggs is in "good spirits" despite suffering a stroke that left him unable to speak.

Sinn Fein returns to talks turmoil

Rory Carroll

NORTHERN Ireland politicians returned to peace talks on Monday and stopped hibernating long enough to agree on one thing: hopes of a deal within three weeks were too optimistic.

Major differences over cross-border bodies, policing and arms decommissioning surfaced soon after the parties sat down at Stormont for what is supposed to be the climax of the peace process.

Unionists and Sinn Fein accused each other of posturing, but government ministers insisted a settlement could be reached in time for a referendum in May.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) picketed Castle Buildings at Stormont as Sinn Fein arrived for the first time in a month following its suspension because of two killings attributed to the IRA.

Unionist leader David Trimble said Sinn Fein was not committed to the process but that an agreement without them could be made between his party and the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), a claim rubbished by rival unionists who said that John Hume would not break with Gerry Adams, the Sinn Fein president.

Mr Trimble requested a formal review session of the talks to discuss progress on decommissioning

paramilitary weapons — a huge issue that ministers thought had been settled.

He said questions had to be asked after reports that IRA targets of policemen had reached provocative levels and that the IRA, not splinter groups, were behind recent attacks and bomb-making.

The talks may be thrown into disarray later this week if Jeffrey Donaldson, a Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) negotiator, supplies a dossier he says contains fresh evidence of IRA violence. This would breach the Mitchell Principles and oblige the Government to object to Sinn Fein again.

Mr Adams said any deal would fall if it excluded his party. "A partial

agreement, a factional agreement, won't work."

Seamus Mallon, the deputy SDLP leader, said there had to be an agreement between unionism and nationalism — not individual parties. Accusing Unionists of becoming "vobly-kneed" as the day of reckoning approached, Mr Mallon predicted that a settlement would emerge, but only after much difficulty, tedium and apprehension.

Ministers stood by the Prime Minister's claim that a deal was "agonisingly close". Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, said she remained "authentically optimistic".

Ron Davies, the Welsh Secretary, opened discussions by detailing the

plans for a Welsh Assembly, a model which the Government hopes may help produce agreement on a Northern Ireland assembly.

The integrity of a referendum, which ministers wait set up before the summer's marching season, was undermined by a report that detailed extensive electoral fraud.

The Commons Northern Ireland Affairs Committee said there was insufficient time to introduce safeguards against multiple registration at the same address, personation and postal vote abuse.

Two-thirds of the postal votes in the Mid Ulster seat narrowly won last year by Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness were said to be questionable. William McCrea, who lost the seat for the DUP, said he was taking legal advice and may mount a legal challenge.

Corrupt police face fast-track dismissals

Sarah Hall

CORRUPT police officers could be ousted within six weeks under a fast-track process in a radical shake-up of complaints and disciplinary procedures unveiled on Monday.

The burden of proof at disciplinary hearings will be lowered from the criminal to the civil standard — ensuring it is easier for crooked officers to be found guilty.

The double jeopardy rule — whereby officers acquitted at a criminal trial escaped a disciplinary hearing — will be abolished, as will the means of evading disciplinary action by "going sick". Officers claiming to be too ill to attend hearings will be dealt with in their absence. "In practice, it will mean they become miraculously present," said the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

The reforms, which come into force from next April, follow a five-year consultation and come less than two months after the latest instance of alleged police corruption centring on 12 Metropolitan police officers suspended in January.

They also come in the wake of claims by Sir Paul Condon, the Metropolitan police commissioner, that there could be 250 dishonest officers in his force.

Among the measures will be powers to allow chief constables to sack more officers in six weeks, instead of having to go through disciplinary hearings that can last years.

The shake-up, which goes some way in following the "compelling case for change" outlined in the Commons home affairs committee's report, also brings an end to an officer's right to silence in disciplinary hearings, but allows them to retain lawyers and fail to ensure they are held in force.

Officers convicted of criminal offences connected with their work could lose the state share of their pension without it.

"I don't believe it's right for these officers to go on drawing on pensions at the public expense even while they're in prison," said Mr Straw. "It is absurd that public money should be paid out to those very few officers who... abuse their position of trust."

The complaints procedure also faces reforms, with the Home Office demanding an independent body be established.

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Church memo calls for radical reform

Medicine Bunting

THE Church of England is culturally light years behind the rest of society because of its innate conservatism and resistance to change, according to a radical internal memo which urges the adoption of spin doctors and Blairite modernisation for the Church.

The document, written by the Reverend Peter Broadbent, Archdeacon of Northolt, one of the General Synod's most senior policy makers, also says the Synod, the Church's parliament, has become "terminally tedious" and is in danger of consigning the institution to irrelevance.

The adoption of spin doctors and Blairite modernisation would infuriate Church members, who are angry about the hostile coverage they receive and who believe such moves have no theological validity and would compromise the integrity of the institution.

The memo offers a devastating critique of the Church's institutional structures and its syncretical method of government. It likens the Church of England to other national institutions such as the Labour party and the monarchy, which have either been transformed, or are in the process of transforming, their way of thinking and operating.

The agenda of Synod will need to be radically reshaped. We are a hostage to fortune on so many issues; our agenda is terminally tedious; we have become a refuge for the pedant, the bureaucrat and the bore... much of our agenda panders to the concerns of small minorities. The memo concludes: "It is imperative that we recognise

the way in which the whole synodal process can lock us into total irrelevance."

The memo, presented last December to the influential Policy Committee of the General Synod chaired by the Archbishop of York, reveals sharp divisions at senior levels of the Church over the nature and scale of the ambitious internal reform programme that Synod finally approved in February and which will be up and running by the end of this year.

The memo acknowledges considerable anxiety among Church officials and members that democracy is being diluted and accountability weakened in the reform process, known as "Working as One Body".

The memo says the process of change is producing "a lot of resistance". "Some of the concerns springs from an innate conservatism and resistance to any kind of change... For the Church of England, this poses a particular problem. We are already culturally light years behind the rest of society, partly because we change and evolve more slowly."

Archdeacon Broadbent said: "There may be some people who feel criticised, but we have to have this debate. We can't stay doing things in the same way we did them in the sixties, seventies and eighties. If they see themselves as irrelevant it is their problem. If they think that is criticism of them, then so be it."

But traditionalists criticised the memo. Ann Widdecombe, the Conservative MP who converted to Catholicism over the Church of England's ordination of women, said: "The gospel does not need spinning. It merely needs spreading."

Justice watchdog receives favourable first-year review

MORE than 1,300 cases have been sent to the body set up to review alleged miscarriages of justice in the first year of its existence. So far, 11 cases have been referred back to the Court of Appeal, writes Duncan Campbell.

The end of this month sees the first anniversary of the Criminal Cases Review Commission. Its brief was to take over the role previously carried out by the Home Office's C3 department. The commission, set up while Michael Howard was home secretary, was given the task of examining doubtful cases and making recommendations as to whether they should be reinvestigated by the police, referred to the Court of Appeal or "closed".

Under the chairmanship of Sir Frederick Crawford, former vice-chancellor of Aston university, a team of commission members drawn from the law, industry, local government, the police and academics and with the assistance of case workers, assesses whether cases merit fresh analysis.

Initially, the commission attracted publicity because its chairman had a prominent position in the Freeman's, whose role in the criminal justice system has been under

scrutiny by the Commons home affairs select committee. Sir Frederick is no longer listed as holding the same senior post in the Misons.

The latest figures from the commission show that 1,304 cases have been sent for review. Of those, 290 are being worked on by the 785 case workers. A total of 299 have been completed.

The 11 cases referred to the Court of Appeal are: Danny McNamara (conspiracy to cause explosion); John Taylor (burglary); Mahmood Mattan (executed for murder in 1952, conviction posthumously quashed on appeal); Derek Bentley (murder); Patrick Nicholls (murder and robbery); David James (murder); George Twitcheil (manslaughter); Raymond Cook (aggravated burglary); Mary Drutman (two murders); Clavis Gerald (aggravated assault); and Michael Gidday (murder).

Civil rights campaigners, lawyers and researchers into cases of alleged miscarriage of justice have broadly welcomed the commission, although reservations have been expressed about whether there are sufficient funds available to deal with such a large caseload.



Queue tips... Westminster Abbey, where the presence of 3 million visitors a year is damaging the building, has introduced a £5 entry fee in an attempt to alleviate the problem and restore calm to a place of prayer. The £4 million-a-year income will be spent on maintaining the building. PHOTO: MARTIN DODD

Scrubs prison staff accused of torture

Duncan Campbell

AN INVESTIGATION has been launched into allegations that prisoners at Wormwood Scrubs prison were subjected to "torture" in the form of systematic beatings. The Prison Service confirmed last week that an inquiry would examine claims that at least eight inmates, and possibly many more, had been assaulted by prison officers.

A dossier made by prisoners at the west London jail and passed to the Prison Service suggested that parts of the prison were "out of control". The complaints were first made at the end of last year in a letter from the prison to the Prison Reform Trust, chaired by the former home secretary, Lord Hurd.

A prisoner claimed that he had been subjected to serious beatings and suffered major injuries. He alleged his head had been stamped on and bashed against a wall. "He hit me," the trust's deputy director, Nick Flynn, said. The trust was unhappy with the results of initial inquiries, and contacted the London law firm Hickman Rose to pursue the man's claims.

Officials received statements from eight prisoners at the jail who claim they have been assaulted by staff, but names have been removed from the list. The two moved are the pair who have been named.

The Prison Service announced that Stephen Moore, governor of Albany prison on the Isle of Wight, will take over as governor of Wormwood Scrubs next week. The sitting governor, Michael Gordon, will become deputy governor.

The prison, which holds about 1,000 inmates, has not had a permanent governor since last year. The appointment was seen as an attempt to reassure those concerned about allegations of misconduct by prison staff.

Officers at the jail last week walked out in protest at the allegations and the way they have been handled. They returned to work shortly afterwards following assurances from Mr Gordon.

The assistant general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association, Mark Freeman, said officers felt they had not received the support they had hoped for from management to which they were entitled. "The staff felt they were all being tarred with the same brush," Mr Freeman said.

Officials received statements from eight prisoners at the jail who claim they have been assaulted by staff, but names have been removed from the list. The two moved are the pair who have been named.

Mr Flynn said: "There appears to have been a conspiracy of silence."

Daniel Machover of Hickman Rose said: "A very reliable source has said that things are out of control. There are allegations of widespread assault on more than 10 prisoners." The allegations in one case "amount to torture". "We think we have reached the tip of an iceberg."

The firm investigated other claims and passed a dossier to the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir David Ramothlam. The matter was then referred to the Home Secretary, Jack Straw.

Many of the prisoners who claim to have been assaulted are black. One is believed to be a sex offender. Mr Flynn said some of the prisoners had suggested that they were hurt in ways which would not slow their injuries.

Two inmates who made allegations of brutality against officers have been moved. A Prison Service spokesman said that one has gone to another jail, and the other is thought to have been taken to hospital while their claims are investigated by an internal inquiry.

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The assistant general secretary of the Prison Officers' Association, Mark Freeman, said officers felt they had not received the support they had hoped for from management to which they were entitled. "The staff felt they were all being tarred with the same brush," Mr Freeman said.

Officials received statements from eight prisoners at the jail who claim they have been assaulted by staff, but names have been removed from the list. The two moved are the pair who have been named.

The Prison Service announced that Stephen Moore, governor of Albany prison on the Isle of Wight, will take over as governor of Wormwood Scrubs next week. The sitting governor, Michael Gordon, will become deputy governor.

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Brown's Budget aims for a grand coalition

Larry Elliott and Michael White

THE CHANCELLOR, Gordon Brown, offered a helping hand to the working poor while reassuring Middle England last week when Labour's first full Budget in 20 years heralded radical reform of the welfare state and a concerted attack on poverty.

Despite a shakeup of the tax and benefits system based on an American-style tax break for those on low incomes, Mr Brown's package carefully avoided measures that would have jeopardised the electoral coalition pieced together by Tony Blair in his landslide victory last May.

Concessions were made to wealthy savers, universal child benefit was increased and left uncut for the time being, and mortgage interest relief was spared from the axe as the Chancellor outlined measures to "make work pay".

The Prime Minister's lobbying for the new Individual Savings Account spared those who had already built up a nest egg of more than £50,000 in ISAs and Tessa was heeded by the Chancellor, which was also thought unwise to abolish tax relief for homeowners at a time when the married couples' allowance was being reduced to pay for a £2,500-week increase in child benefit.

Mr Brown's long-awaited Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) was buttressed by extra help for childcare in the form of special insurance and a re-shaping of national insurance designed to make low-paid workers more attractive to employers.

The Budget was "prudent with a purpose", the Chancellor sought to put flesh on the bones of the Prime Minister's call for Labour to occupy the "radical centre" of politics and to launch a programme designed to build a national economic consensus.

Mr Brown said an "unshakeable commitment" to tough monetary and fiscal rules had to be combined with measures to promote enterprise, welfare reform and strong public services.

In a clear bid to rid Labour of the

last vestiges of its reputation as an anti-business party, Mr Brown pushed through a cut in corporation tax, introduced a two-tier capital gains tax to discourage short-term investment and offered tax breaks for venture capitalists. "My message to business is this: when you are ready to start out, start up, start investing or start hiring, we - this government - are on your side."

The Chancellor's 63-minute speech recalled his determination to end the poverty trap that sees some poor families lose money in benefits than they gain in pay. "I say to those who can work this is our New Deal. Your responsibility is to seek work. My guarantee is that if you work, work will pay," Mr Brown said.

The Chancellor's tough but tender approach was reinforced by some extra money for the Government's priority areas for higher public spending: education, health and public transport, financed by an under-spending in other areas.

Labour's determination to hang on to its support in those rural areas where it unexpectedly triumphed last May was highlighted with a £50 million rural transport fund.

The increase in child benefit and its £2,500-week increase in child support for those on income support was a family credit with children under 11 were designed to ease the bitter taste left by the Government's controversial decision to axe lone parent supplements last November.

There was some bad news for the better off, however, with the Chancellor committing himself in principle to taxing child benefit for higher earners and increasing stamp duty for higher-priced houses sold for more than £250,000.

Tax loopholes exploited by off-shore trusts will be closed, raising up to £1.5 billion in extra revenues.

Mr Brown piled extra taxes on traditional targets such as cigarettes, alcohol and petrol. Company cars were again clubbed, but vehicle excise duty will be frozen, and will be cut for small cars with least polluting engines.

The Tory leader, William Hague,



denounced the Budget as a "step-by-step betrayal" of Blair's election pledges that would eventually hurt jobs and growth.

Treasury sources said the package would be neutral, with the £2.6 billion cost of the WFTC and the national insurance changes balanced by higher fuel duties, the increase in stamp duty, higher duty on diesel and the closure of tax loopholes.

The Tory leader, William Hague,

Budget highlights

New Working Families Tax Credit from October 1999:

The key part of plans to make work pay more than benefits. Families with two or more children will receive a maximum of £180 a week. No income tax until earnings reach £220.

Childcare tax credits: Covers a maximum 70 per cent of childcare costs up to £100 a week for a first child, and £150 for two or more children. Designed to make work attractive for parents on WFTC who were previously excluded from the labour market by childcare costs.

Child benefit off-inflation: Upgraded by inflation plus 2.5 per cent a week, funded by restrictions on married couples' allowance.

Unemployment: £75-a-week subsidy for employers to take on long-term unemployed, £50 million to help homeless young people into jobs, £100 million to help tackle skills shortages.

National Insurance: No contributions on earnings below £81 a week from next year.

Transport: An extra £500 million for public transport, including a £50 million rural transport fund. Car licence fees frozen this year, cut by £50 for small "clementine" next year.

License fees for drivers and vehicles to be cut by £500. Unlicensed petrol cut by 4.4p a litre, leaded by 4.5p, diesel by 5.5p a litre.

Sin taxes: Cigarettes up by 20p a packet from December, 10p a pint of beer, 4p on a glass of wine from January 1. Duty on spirits frozen.

Education and health: An extra £250 million for research and development, £500 million for health.

Business: A 1p cut in corporation tax and a similar reduction in the small companies' tax rate. Advance corporation tax abolished. First-year capital allowances for small and medium-sized firms increased. A £50 million venture capital fund for universities for investment in innovation.

Rethink on individual savings accounts: Existing holders of Personal Equity Plans to keep accumulated savings free of capital gains tax.

Charity: The Government will contribute up to £40 for every £100 donated to Third World charities. Tax loopholes: Plans are to be brought forward to close a number of tax loopholes, including off-shore trusts.

Labour goes to work on a new ideology

COMMENT

Hugo Young

GORDON BROWN'S first full Budget would show, said Tony Blair, what New Labour was all about. It would show that New Labour is all about work, and that it has promised in the election.

This time the promise is to non-working people, and there is no such thing as the Labour movement to register its feelings. The Blair-Brown world unveiled last week is about work of the people, by the people, for the people, as long as the people are defined to include every class of earner and provider across the income scale.

The Budget was about incentivising the whole of society, irrespective of class. It was from the Labour - sorry, New Labour - benches that the first growth of approval was given for the welfare-to-work schemes in the Budget, and the reduction of corporation tax and assorted similar pro-business measures.

This had come to seem an entirely natural response, such as the speed with which the government has associated itself with the business imperative.

received with rapture by the Labour movement as representing the first step in that "irreversible transfer of wealth and power to working people and their families" which we had promised in the election.

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There was not a single sop to the vestiges of opinion still surviving from the Healey era. The enormously important tax credits to be given for children and the radical enhancements for the relief of low-paid working families are a social statement for the modern era, not an obsequious nod to old gods.

Another way of putting this is to say that New Labour is all about encouraging aspiration, however lowly, rather than cushioning underdog privilege, however churlish. This is the welfare-to-work schemes in the Budget, and the new money for public services, is what distinguishes the philosophy of this government from John Major's.

The schemes have been conjured up with passionate enthusiasm, the money for health and education handed out by real believers.

The New Labour ministers are, however, cautious about trusting

themselves. The memory of 1974 obscures them as a lesson in the catastrophe of profligate spending, which must be to be grabbed back when the economy turns down. As a class to confine them, they have therefore invented their 10-year plan, a domestic stability pact, that is supposed to restrain spending. It's the second of the expedients that subcontracts their freedom - and the Labour movement's - to a plan that is supposed to restrain spending.

For no incentives to work, however imaginative, will work if work itself does not exist. And this is now contingent on another body than the Treasury, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England, which will make its own judgment on the Chancellor in deciding whether to raise interest rates, thereby affecting, perhaps decisively, the level of the pound, therefore exports, therefore work itself.

It is extraordinary to listen to a Budget, traditionally the key moment of economic management, that makes no reference to the vital question of the hour: Not a word about either the interest rate or exchange rate. This makes one see this moment in a different light: as a long

term social pattern-setter more than an immediate economic decider.

In the short term the Chancellor is being accountable to the MPC, but the MPC is to anyone, if the hawks secure a majority on the MPC, the ideology of work will take a sharp turn. It is almost as if the actual functioning of the incentives that will be put in place. The small print has yet to be thoroughly defined, and the behaviour of unworking people, presented with new marginal changes in the possibilities open to them, will only disclose itself over time. Reports on the welfare-to-work schemes over the next few months are patchy. The schemes call for collaboration, as well as hard-headedness, from the providers as well as the takers of work, and this philosophy - the very core of what Blair-Brownism most passionately believes in - has yet to penetrate every part of society.

Mr Blair and his team put their faith in the belief that people can be made to want to work. But they don't control all the circumstances in which the interest rate or exchange rate. This makes one see this moment in a different light: as a long

John Major



Fuel injection... The world has come to expect abundant cheap oil

Scraping the Bottom of the Barrel

COMMENT
GEORGE F. WILL

TWENTY-FIVE years ago this October the first "oil shock" supposedly ushered in an era of "limits" and "diminished expectations," small cars and Jimmy Carter's cardinal sweater. Today gasoline is cheaper — less than 80 cents a gallon in some parts of America — than the designer water people sip from plastic bottles while talking to their sporty little vehicles that are so unfairly safe when they collide with the small cars Americans are encouraged to drive in order to save gasoline.

A gallon of gas costs, in inflation-adjusted terms, less than half what it cost 40 years ago. Yet Irwin Steizer, senior polymath at the American Enterprise Institute, reports that the daily rate for renting drilling rigs rose 42 percent last year. Oil companies are eager to find more of the commodity they are selling for less because the cost of producing oil has fallen even faster than the price of oil.

One reason is new software that removes much of the guesswork in exploration. And Steizer notes that, whereas 50 years ago it was considered a marvel to drill to 20 feet of water, drilling now will be done to 10,000 feet, Steizer recalls that in 1972, when world reserves were 700 billion barrels, the Club of Rome

reported predicted exhaustion of the world's oil in 1980. Since then 550 billion barrels have been used, but proven reserves are more than 1 trillion.

Asia's economic boom increased oil consumption there sixfold in 25 years. Today's Asian lust has an aspect helpful to the U.S. economy. Asian demand for U.S. goods and services has contracted, but so has Asian demand for oil, which has contributed to declining oil prices. That decline increases the disposable income of American consumers.

The price of oil has dropped more than 40 percent since October, and this month drifted below \$13 a barrel. Steizer believes that the big oil-exporting nations can make money selling at \$5 a barrel, and will soon be doing so. This could have a stimulative effect in America equivalent to a tax cut approaching \$100 billion annually.

Until oil prices plummeted, it had been an axiom of journalism that all news is economic news and all economic news is bad. That is a lead lining can be detected on every slender column of newsprint. Here comes a drain on the budget, social waste, declining unemployment. Declining unemployment? Expect inflationary overheat of labor markets. Rising interest rates? A recipe for sluggishness. Declining interest rates? Look for general overheating.

The task of finding the gloomy

dimension of declining oil prices is the testing of the ingenuity of the Cassandra class. However, Colin J. Campbell, writing in The National Interest quarterly, argues that since 1850, when the world's population was 1 billion, population has increased sixfold and oil extraction has increased in direct proportion. So the world is using up its geological endowment at a prodigious rate.

Although discovery has become cheaper, discovery rates are falling sharply, and by 2003 half the planet's supply of conventional oil will have been consumed. (Conventional oil is that which is easily extracted. Nonconventional oil is produced, as from Canadian tar sands deposits, which, according to Richard L. George, writing in Scientific American, contain more oil than Saudi Arabia's reserves.)

Campbell says the world is on the eve of a "historic discontinuity," not because it is running out of oil, but because it is running out of the abundant cheap oil on which it has come to depend. Even if Campbell's cautionary ascriptions are all valid, they mean only that this golden moment cannot last forever. This moment is not simply a gift extracted from a bountiful planet. Rather, it has been produced by scientific creativity that is largely the fruit of freedom in industrialized countries. Freedom is a political, not a natural resource, and America has the world's largest supply of it.

Advocates of lifting the embargo

Clinton Relaxes Cuba Sanctions

Thomas W. Lippman

PRESIDENT CLINTON last week decided to allow Cuban Americans to resume sending money directly to relatives on the island and to permit charter flights from the United States in an effort to capitalize on a changed atmosphere in Cuba inspired by the visit of Pope John Paul II.

In addition, the president will instruct the Treasury Department and other agencies to simplify licensing procedures for exporting medicine and medical devices to Cuba and to expedite the processing of license applications.

Senior White House officials described the president's decision as an effort to bolster the status of the Roman Catholic Church in Cuba and decrease the dependence of the Cuban people on state organizations.

President Fidel Castro welcomed the first signs of a thaw in relations with the United States. He told CNN that the U.S. decision to reinstate humanitarian flights was "positive and constructive." He said the move would "help in creating a better climate of relations."

Clinton's decision marks the first relaxation of U.S. policy toward Cuba since Cuban jet fighters shot down two unarmed small planes operated by a Miami-based Cuban exile group in January 1996, killing four crew members.

Officials insisted, however, that the moves do not signal a weakening of the long-standing U.S. embargo on trade with Cuba, which still remains the cornerstone of efforts to isolate and undermine the communist regime of Fidel Castro.

Senior officials said Clinton has the authority to make the changes by executive order and does not need legislation. Congressional action would be required to scrap the embargo because it was written into law in the 1960 Helms-Burton act, which Clinton signed reluctantly after the shutdown of the planes.

Before the shutdown, Clinton said last November that he wanted "to open up with Cuba, to have a gradually evolving relationship." If Castro eased his repressive policies, the relaxation of restrictions announced last week, however, "is a response to what the Pope did, not the response to anything Castro has done," a senior official said.

Advocates of lifting the embargo

step, while anti-Castro hardliners blasted it as an unwarranted gesture to a dictator who responded to the Pope's visit with a new crackdown on dissidents.

Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, R-Florida, and Dennis Ross-Liberman, R-Florida, both Cuban Americans, said in a statement that Clinton once again makes clear that he seeks to unilaterally relax sanctions on the Castro tyranny. Rather than providing Castro with the hard currency he seeks, the administration should find ways to strengthen and effectively assist the internal opposition in Cuba.

Officials close to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said she took soundings in Florida's Cuban American community during a recent trip to Miami and came away convinced that Clinton could get political support for the changes.

Albright recommended the modifications to Clinton after she met with the Pope in Rome this month. Once implemented, the visit will substantially reinstate the rules he was in place before the refugee crisis of 1994 and the 1995 shoot-down of planes.

The Pope arrived at the U.S. embassy during his visit to Cuba in January. But the premise underlying the president's decision, officials said, is that the visit de facto ended the since-Castro came to power in 1959, showed that the Cuban people want and are organized to control their own state to expand on their poverty and political isolation, and that the Church may be prepared to take this role.

The Pope's visit has created a different dynamic, a senior official said. "Castro is not going to change, but what is happening here is that there is a desire of the [Cuban] people to end the isolation that has been created" between them and the Castro government.

"What we have to do is isolate Castro as much as possible," the senior official said. "The outside world cares about them and by encouraging non-state organizations such as the Church to become more active, this official said.

As described by senior officials, who insisted on anonymity, the president's initiative is consistent in a number of ways with the Carter-Cuban American National Foundation to send donations of food and medicine to the island through church-affiliated organizations.

There may be the waning influence of President Joe Maria Figueres' administration, but he has not let up in his campaign to bring high technology equipment to the island. Costa Rica's drive to become the Silicon Valley of Latin America.

Figueres, a technocrat, has been conducting meetings with down technology firms to discuss their experiences doing business in Costa Rica. By all accounts, the efforts reflect the nation's commitment to creating a hospitable environment for foreign investment in this small Central American country of 2 million people.

Figueres is accompanied by a team of investment experts. Figueres also visited Costa Rica last month to meet with corporate leaders, including Bill Gates of Microsoft Corp.

Costa Rican officials decided 15 years ago to transform the economy away from one based on agricultural exports such as coffee, bananas, and beef, to one centered on computer chips and services.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 29 1998

Going From Red Tape to Pink Slips

China's bureaucrats face a massive shakeup, writes Steven Mufson in Beijing

FOR 40 years, Chinese civil servants received policy pay, but their jobs were secure for life. They received evaluations, but 90 percent simply said "satisfactory." The criteria used to evaluate them were not related to managerial prowess, but rather to loyalty to the Communist Party. And in the absence of democracy, their power was often great.

Sore their numbers. By one estimate, 60 percent of government revenue went to pay for the wages of officials by the end of 1996. Since 1993, 1 million new officials have been added to the government payroll each year.

Now the sheltered world of Chinese civil servants is about to be shaken. With this month's announcement of the results of a government reorganization, four new ministries will be created, but 15 of the 40 existing ministries will be abolished. Hundreds of thousands of civil servants could be fired.

The incompatibilities of government institutions to the development of a socialist market economy have become increasingly apparent. Premier Li Peng said.

A recently established school for public administration in Beijing already has been trying to rewrite the rules of the Chinese civil service. The school's curriculum is the state to help their poverty and political isolation, and that the Church may be prepared to take this role.

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Delegation on their way to a session of the National People's Congress in Beijing last week. Government reorganization could lead to hundreds of thousands of civil servants being fired

quality of civil servants," said Zhang Luxue, vice president of the school of administration.

The task is enormous. China is the country that invented the civil service. Its traditions date to the 7th-century Tang Dynasty, and are now overlaid with a Communist Party cadre system that makes most officials answer to party discipline rather than an independent code of ethics.

Even if the government succeeds in paring back the bureaucracy, the Communist Party's control remains perhaps the biggest obstacle to generating the biggest change in the civil service.

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reform is bringing change where it counts most immediately in the daily lives of the average citizen," said Ma Yanyan Samuels, a consultant with the executive education program at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, which is assisting the Chinese administration school.

Some of the school's case studies reveal issues that affect day-to-day governing in China. For example, in the old cadre system, party committees selected civil servants; one case studied a new recruitment system in a bureau that decided to advertise 10 vacancies and interview candidates.

One issue Du is studying is the rule of law, now much discussed but nonexistent during her youth when at hoc groups of Red Guards ruled. Before arriving at the administration school, Du had given little consideration to the possibility of being sued. As part of her training program, she went to court and saw a government agency lose a lawsuit.

"If we're sued, it could be me standing in court," she said.

Attending the school, said Xie Yanzhong, was "like adding gasoline to a car." He supervises 112 civil servants in the logistics department of Sichuan province. Xie said he studied topics ranging from staff travel allowances to how to separate different administrative institutions. It's been especially helpful for Xie, whose basic education consisted of 28 years at the Sichuan provincial party school.

Samuels, the Maxwell consultant, compares the Chinese administration school to the establishment of the U.S. Civil Service Commission in 1883 and the end to the excesses of the Jacksonian spoils system.

Samuels said the late Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong tore one page from the Soviet Union and one from the Jacksonians by stressing the "politics first" code for civil servants. Later, during the Cultural Revolution, one slogan was "better red than expert" — and the government apparatus came to a standstill.

When Deng Xiaoping came to power, China culled the ranks of the civil service and began to restore regular government functions. But the effort to establish the national administration school is itself a case study of the problems of dealing with Chinese bureaucracy. Efforts to introduce new civil service standards were interrupted by a purge of party liberals in 1987 and by the violent end to political protests in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

The appointment of conservative party figures to oversee the school and then a dispute with city officials over land availability further delayed the launching of the institution. Finally, in 1993, the National People's Congress passed a civil service reform law that established the school.

Samuels said that more standardized qualifications for a more professional civil service could reduce corruption. "When the means test for power in China becomes something other than personal connections, China will be on the road toward defining its own more transparent and equitable political system," he said.

"They have to learn how to run a society ruled by law, that isn't corrupt, and where officials have responsibility for the people," added Samuels.

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Internet Traders Win Moratorium on Tax

Rajiv Chandrasekaran

THE NATION'S governors agreed last week to support a three-year ban on special Internet commerce taxes in exchange for a promise by Congress to consider requiring electronic merchants to collect sales taxes after the moratorium.

The National Governors' Association had opposed bipartisan legislation in the House and Senate to enact an Internet tax moratorium, saying the freeze could deprive states and local governments of crucial tax revenue as electronic commerce becomes more popular. The

governors' disapproval threatened to scuttle the bill, introduced by Rep. Christopher Cox, R-California, and Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon.

Industry groups contend that imposing sales taxes on Internet transactions will slow electronic commerce and make it less appealing to consumers.

After three months of negotiations with the governors' association, Cox agreed last week to revise his bill, reducing the moratorium from six years to three. His bill would set up a "commission" on Internet Commerce that after the moratorium would propose a system

of levying state sales taxes on Internet and mail-order purchases.

The governors want to require Internet and mail-order merchants to collect sales taxes even if they do not have a physical presence in the state to which the goods are shipped. Currently, such businesses are not required to collect state sales taxes if they do not operate in the destination state's jurisdiction in 45 states and the District of Columbia, however, are required to send the appropriate sales taxes to their state treasury, a rule that is largely flouted.

Because there are about 30,000 different tax jurisdictions nationwide, industry groups say that imposing a tax-collection requirement on merchants would create severe administrative burdens.

The governors want the commission to consider setting up a uniform national system of sales tax rules for electronic commerce and uniform rates for each state.

"Our goal is to ensure the system is fair," said Utah Gov. Mike Leavitt, R, who spearheaded the issue for this government last week. "A person should be taxed fairly no matter where the purchase is made."

Wyden said he would not support the commission. "It creates a plan that's going to

create tens of billions of dollars in new taxes that will clobber small businesses," he said.

President Clinton has expressed support for a moratorium and a commission to study approaches to taxing Internet commerce. Cox emphasized that recommendations by the commission will have to go through the standard legislative process.

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Costa Rica Sees Future as Silicon Valley

Serge R. Kovalev in San Jose

There may be the waning influence of President Jose Maria Figueres' administration, but he has not let up in his campaign to bring high technology equipment to the island. Costa Rica's drive to become the Silicon Valley of Latin America.

Figueres, a technocrat, has been conducting meetings with down technology firms to discuss their experiences doing business in Costa Rica. By all accounts, the efforts reflect the nation's commitment to creating a hospitable environment for foreign investment in this small Central American country of 2 million people.

Figueres is accompanied by a team of investment experts. Figueres also visited Costa Rica last month to meet with corporate leaders, including Bill Gates of Microsoft Corp.

Costa Rican officials decided 15 years ago to transform the economy away from one based on agricultural exports such as coffee, bananas, and beef, to one centered on computer chips and services.

For the first time, according to government figures, Costa Rica is expected to earn more from high technology exports in 1998 than from bananas or coffee or even its lucrative tourism industry. Buoyed by investment in the world economy, sales of technology goods as Intel, sales of technology goods abroad should reach \$1 billion, a threefold increase over last year's levels — making Costa Rica the fastest exporter of such equipment per capita in Latin America.

"This is a country that is at the turning point of its evolution toward the 21st century," said Eduardo Alvarado, general manager of the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Office, which oversees the nation's free trade zone, in which 150 overseas companies operate.

Long considered a anomaly in a part of the world that has been rife with poverty, social chaos and corruption, Costa Rica has used its unique status as a cornerstone of its marketing push to secure foreign investors. After abolishing its army nearly a half century ago, the country has pumped large sums of

money into education, creating a highly skilled workforce that reflects a population with a 95 percent literacy rate.

Although funding for such social programs has been reduced over the last decade because of Costa Rica's large internal debt, Figueres recently announced an ambitious plan to provide all elementary and high school students with their own e-mail addresses by the end of this year. The administration is leaving office in May, but funds for the program considered Mexico and a number of other countries before deciding to invest \$600 million in a new complex in Costa Rica — the largest investment to date in this nation by a single corporation.

Alvarado added that "the country has been very clever at looking at itself and evaluating its strengths and weaknesses."

These weaknesses include a pressing need for extensive infrastructure improvements, such as upgrading and increasing the capacity of the country's international airport and seaports, and improving the quality of roads, many of which

are in terrible condition, particularly outside of the capital of San Jose.

Furthermore, proposals can get bogged down by minutes, a process that is deemed to ensure the integrity of contracts but which can result in frustrating delays.

Corporations have also complained that dealing with Costa Rican customs can be inconvenient because of archaic bureaucratic practices. Executives also say they would like to see government monopolies over telecommunications and insurance broken up to improve services.

Employment of Intel, which will employ 2,000 workers at its Costa Rican plants here, has highlighted another problem that Costa Rica must deal with: a shortage of qualified engineers and technicians in the educational and business sectors to keep pace.

Executives stressed that as Costa Rica looks toward the next millennium, it is crucial that the country not become complacent. "You must stay on your laurels," said Alvarado. "Just because you have a good literacy rate does not mean it will be there forever or that others won't catch up with you."

These weaknesses include a pressing need for extensive infrastructure improvements, such as upgrading and increasing the capacity of the country's international airport and seaports, and improving the quality of roads, many of which

Handwritten note: "Costa Rica is the Silicon Valley of Latin America."

Letter from Buenos Aires Andrew Graham-Yooll

Staying power

TWO anniversaries of note are being marked these days. The English Club, a watering hole for generations of expatriates in the grey, smelly city centre of Buenos Aires, is 100 years old. The Dorado Club, an anglers' and drinkers' refuge built in an idyllic setting in the islands across the Paraná river, north of Buenos Aires, has just turned 80.

The club anniversaries show the permanence of the British presence in the River Plate area — an influence that survived a first military invasion in 1806, 19th century growth and decline, nationalisation of the British railways in 1948, the end of the meat-packing trade in 1972, and the Falklands war in 1982.

Now British business investors are setting up all over Argentina. The English Club, whose president is half Irish and half Scots, originated in the Albion Club, founded by a Mr Wilde in 1883, and took its current name in 1888. It has always been in the same area, between the bunking and the former red-light districts of Buenos Aires.

Although the present premises have been in the same place since 1935, some of the habits of old still hold. The *atarantes* (saccharine) group of members meet for long lunches and much wine on Fridays, and are named after the engineering firm, A. Torrens & Co, that laid the iron drains of Buenos Aires a century ago. The pipes were used as temporary dwellings by the *atarantes*, who became known as *atarantes*.

In 1983, with the economy in ruins at the end of the most dictatorship in a century, the English Club incorporated the much older Strangers' Club, founded in 1841 and which organised Buenos Aires' first stock exchange.

The British, or English-speaking community (for few now are born Brits), never quite came to terms with Argentina, and set themselves apart. They stood clear of the corruption, but approved by omission of murders by the military. Killing letting dissidents was considered

acceptable because the guerrillas killed army officers. So the British community failed to see the horror of the "disappeared" in the seventies. They saw generals as real, worthy heroes, even when most generals were crooks.

One of those criminals, General Juan Carlos Onganía, who died two years ago, sent mounted troops into the university in July 1966, destroying a generation of learning, and putting Argentines on the road to nearly 15 years of civil war. But by British community standards he was good because he painted railway stations white and blue, and locked up noisy trade unions.

English clubs sprang up all over Argentina, wherever the railways stopped or farming communities settled. The English here go to clubs to get together with out noticing each other. The Dorado, started in 1917, moved to its present beautiful site a couple of hours from Buenos Aires in 1937. The Dorado became a refuge from town life and spouses.

POLITICS for the Dorado membership, as far most of the community, was a dishonourable and dirty pursuit. It is one reason why the Anglo-Argentine community is still ruled by its honesty. The "Anglo" are trusted board members and seen as impartial mediators. All these years later, even after the Falklands/Malvinas war, they still considered more reliable than the rest.

Thus politics have bypassed the Anglo, with their Calceolarian Ball in July and Burns Night in mid-September. It is too hot for haggis in January. The surreal, lingering presence of the corrupt dictators and generals of the past few decades will be gently touched at the golden-rod time at the anniversary dinner ball on May 15. And surreal it is that Argentina needs the Anglo-Argentines more than ever. Their clubs and customs may be old-fashioned, out of touch in many ways, but as a group they are one of the only remnants of honesty in a corrupt country.

A Country Diary

John Vallins

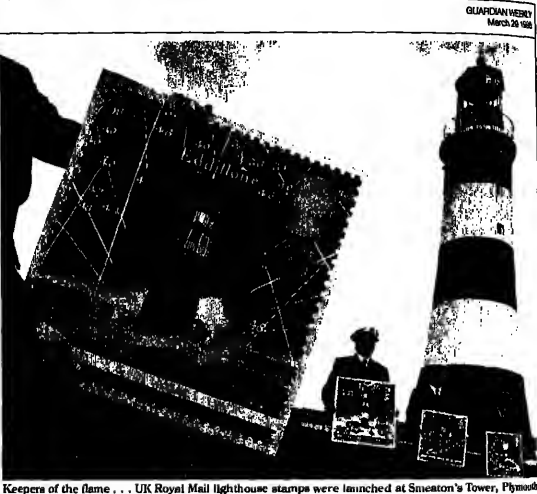
SOMERSET. On an action of the chased Somerset and Dorset Railway, where it skirts the hillside at Cole, a surprising outcrop of brashly modern brick houses makes a strong case against piece-meal development in green space. But the valley below holds its own. The stream is bordered with pollarded trees. The buildings are in local golden stone, and the 18th century manor has a watermill.

Beside the stream is a small-holding with free-range chickens, two pigs, and 73 geese. It began 11 years ago with three. Some are Golden Guineas. A few of these, including one national champion, are chaste — aristocrats with long, elegantly shaggy coats. Others have smooth coats, and their colour varies from creamy pale to deep red-brown. Like Channel Island cattle, Guernsey goats produce creamy milk.

But the herd must earn its

keep as well as look beautiful and win prizes. Besides the Guineas, there are plenty of British Toggenburgs. They are the most beautiful of the brown cows, giving the maximum return in terms of volume of milk on what they eat. They have quality attractive faces, striped like a badger's, and are as sociably inquisitive as the Guineas, gathering round, pushing and nuzzling, nibbling at unfamiliar objects like a visitor's jumper. Milking is at 5.30, morning and evening, 365 days a year. The owner does not have a day off. On odd occasions, when she has unconvincingly been asked to stand in, the yield has dropped by about a third. The goats do not give of their best except in her.

The milk is transported twice a week to a cheese-maker. Goat meat, eaten in great quantity in other parts of the world, is not familiar in Britain. Goat milk is increasingly valued for digestibility and benefits to health.



Keepers of the flame... UK Royal Mail lighthouse stamps were launched at Smeaton's Tower, Plymouth. Roe with, from left, keepers Terry Johns, Eddie Matthews and Bill Arnold

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

READ that the United States since contemplated going to war with Britain because Africans escape American slavery had been sheltered on British territory. Has anyone more information?

THE issue most likely referred to was part of a running contest between Britain and the US over Florida. Runaway slaves had established communities with the Seminole Indians in Florida going back to the time before the American revolution. Florida passed into British control in 1763, and back to the Spanish and then the French before being taken over by the US. During this time the runaway slave community grew and, together with the Seminoles, developed a formidable fighting force which resisted any attempt to control them by the Spanish, the British, the French or, after the Louisiana Purchase (1803), the Americans.

In 1817-18 an American general, Andrew Jackson, led an attack into the area of east Florida. During the fighting, Jackson captured and court-martialed two British traders, Alexander Arbuthnot and Robert Ambrister, for "aiding the enemy". One was hanged, the other was shot.

British public opinion was incensed, but more over the killing of the two traders rather than any concern about the issue of slavery — after all, Parliament did not pass the Emancipation Act until 1833, and slaves were still held in the British Caribbean until 1837. — D H Palmer, Manchester

WE OFTEN hear people described as "intellectual". I would like to be one. Can this be achieved by reading selected books? If so, which?

THE questioner may well find he already qualifies. At Christmas dinner when my parents, I referred to the Guardian Conversation. The silence was broken by my mother: "Oh, she said, 'an intel-

lectual." My parents are Daily Telegraph readers. — Cleo Heathcote, Huddersfield

RECOMMEND the popular handbook *The Dumpty's Guide to Being an Intellectual*. — Ken Frank, Claremont, California, USA

TO BECOME an intellectual I think I've read a lot never, ever, do anything. — Mick Furey, Malibu, California

THE qualifications for recognition vary from country to country. As a rough guide, in Germany an intellectual is someone who has written a book about Hegel in America an intellectual is someone who has read Hegel; in England an intellectual is someone who has heard of Hegel. — Peter J Yearwood, Reading

ANYONE with a genuine interest in ideas is an intellectual. There is no reason why a philosophically minded illiterate should not be considered an intellectual. On the other hand, no matter what books you read, they will never make you into an intellectual if you read them out of genuine interest but with some other motive — in order, for example, to become an intellectual. — Stephen Sheffield, Providence, Rhode Island, USA

WHAT is the longest word with no recurring letters?

THE Addendum to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, third edition, has "dermatoglyphic", which has 15 letters. — Eric Smith, Antigua, West Indies

WHO invented playing cards and what is the origin of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades?

PLAYING CARDS evolved from the tarot card set, the symbolic picture cards used for cartomancy. The modern-day cards are derived from the 10 numeral and four court cards for each of four suits, which form part of the 78-card tarot set.

Instead of Hearts, Diamonds, Clubs and Spades they have Cups, Coins, Clubs and Swords. In the tarot, the Knight and Page cards merged into one card, the Jack. The remaining 22 cards in the tarot, the Major Arcana, were dropped when the cards were used strictly for card games, with the exception of the Fool, which became the Joker. — Natsuka Sugita, Lillian Rock, NSW, Australia

ANY ANSWERS?

IS big beautiful? — Adrienne Dench, Auckland, New Zealand

ON THE back of a fruit juice carton, it says "the car is a car". What are the other two? — Deborah Tacon, Chester

I AM told that when foxes and rabbits cohabit to warren, the foxes do not eat their "own" rabbits. In this case, and I say why? — Frank Donaghy, Chapel Falls, Ohio, USA

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, tagged to "Notes & Queries". Or, post to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3DF. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

In the land of legend

Paul Evans

The wind roars above the wooded valley that breaks through cliffs into Cornwall's Atlantic coast between Tintagel and Bude. Somehow a pair of buzzards manage short flights over the treetops without being flung out to sea. They're staking their claim to the place, guardians of its eerie stillness below the gale. It is a stillness of trees wrapped in moss and polyp fern, of flowering violets and daffodils beside the stream, but it also has the reputation for being one of the most haunted valleys in this ghost-shrouded land. Frances Howard wrote: "Now is the time for making in woods: by the cold stream come from the waterfall, are you afraid? Afraid of what?"

Perhaps the waterfall itself. At the head of the valley the springs and gorges, with rain fast together and smash through a fissure of rock to crash 20m down into St Nectan's Glade (Cornish for basin). Above is a 7m deep cauldron in which the water churns and boils over, bursting through a hole to pour into the Trevillian river. Above the hole, at least three different levels, are the rocks in similar beds formed by the same hydraulic force, the top basin nearly 70m above the present one. Below the hole a new basin is being hammered out since 1921, eventually replacing it. It is estimated that within 30 years the depression will only be as deep as a shower — such a time scale makes monument on earth so ephemeral.

Around 500 AD, the hermit Nectan built his shrine at the top of the hill. Local tradition has it that he built a tower where a silver bell hung to warn sailors of the rocks along this part of the coast. Towards the end of his life Nectan's Celtic faith was under siege from the Romans, and he was killed. He buried his silver bell into the rocks. There are stories of this shrouded bell ringing as an omen of fortune, of ghostly monks



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LINDH

chanting in the valley and of St Nectan's sisters, the "Trey Ladies", who still wander here. Being so close to Tintagel, the legendary birthplace of King Arthur, this place is also wrapped in the Arthurian mythology that has become a local industry. The knights of the round table are supposed to have camped themselves in the waterfall before setting off in search of the holy grail from St Nectan's sixth century shrine.

The chapel of St Nectan's hermitage became a ruin, and in 1880 a cottage was built on the site and extended into a chateau-style bungalow in 1900. The people who now own it charge visitors to see the waterfall, but this has not been a happy arrangement and 15,000 visitors a year became an overpowering pressure. The falls have been closed for

some years and only recently reopened due to local pressure. This is still a strangely violent, contested place. The waterfall's wild power and vertiginous slues the imagination as it shapes the valley. The noise of the water is deafening and absorbs the sound of the gale roaring above. The spray from the falls allows the clean to support a rain-forest of ferns, mosses and liverworts that thrive in the pounding chaos. The simplest of things assume wonderful significance. An ash seed key on its single wing flutters into the void of the chasm and flickers downward. In the slow-motion moment of its descent the violence of the waterfall and the violence of the storm subside as a space of tranquility opens up in the wilderness.

At the table, South decided to hope that his partner's ace was in diamonds, so he led his singleton of that suit. His partner beat the ace of diamonds, but...

North
♠ Q9763
♥ 4
♦ AQ109653
♣ None

West
♠ K10
♥ Q97
♦ K874
♣ AQ75

East
♠ A62
♥ AKJ10532
♦ 92
♣ 2

South
♠ 184
♥ 85
♦ 2
♣ KJ108643

Chess Leonard Barden

LINARES 1998, which finished this month, was the second-highest-rated tournament in chess history (after Las Palmas 1996) and yet another attempt to create a modern equivalent to historical chess tournaments such as St Petersburg 1914 and Avro 1938.

Yet Linares had only seven players competing, which was odd in more than one sense: was the exclusion of an eighth player just a way of giving the GMA an extra rest day, or a studied insult to the Fide champion, Anatoly Karpov?

Either way, it made for a topical event, with only India's Vishy Anand representing the rest of the world against five ex-Soviet and the Bulgarian Topalov. The inclusion of Michael Adams, for example, would have made for a more competitive tournament.

Linares had more positive players than the dull Las Palmas 1996, but there was also plenty of jockeying for position with cautious draws. This was further proof that the belief that an all-British field makes for memorable chess may be flawed: mixed-strength events have a better dynamic, and even the front-runners at St Petersburg and Avro had outshone players — Siebert, Varnack and Frank Marshall, then José Capablanca and Salo Flohr.

The most significant result in the first half at Linares was Kasparov's win from his psychological edge he has held over the world No 3 since their 1995 match.

G Kasparov v V Anand
1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc2 Nc6 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 Ng6 6 Bg3 e6 7 Qc2 h6 7 Ne6 would give Kasparov vicious revenge for his loss to Deep Blue.
7 N13 Bde6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4

Nxe4 10 Qxe4 Qc7 11 Qd4 Rg8 A new move. It works out badly, so Anand reverted to the normal B3 in a later game, drawing easily. Later still, Visually Ivanchuk innovated by 6... Nd6 and scored a fine win, so this equivalent is the GM flavour of the month.

12 Nd2 Nf6 13 Qf3 e5 14 dxe5 Bxe5 15 Ne4 Bc6 16 Bc2 0-0-0 17 0-0-0 Nd7 18 Bxe1 Rg8 19 Kd1 White can gain the bishop pair any time, since the e5 piece can't run away (B6? 20 B4 and Nd6). Anand's defence wrecks his own pawn structure.

e5 20 B4 Bf4 21 Bxf4 gxf4 22 Bf1 Nf8 If Bxf5 23 Rxf5 and 24 Nd6. **23 Qh5 Qd8 24 Bxe1 Nxe6 25 Nd4** White pawns can't run away, so Kasparov plays to restrict Black over the whole board. **Qe7 26 Qe5+ Qc7 27 Qh5 Qe7 28 h3 Qf8 29 Ne5 Rf7 30 Ng4 Bxd1+ 31 Rd1 Qe7 32 Bf1 Rf8 33 Qf5 Kd8 34 h5 Rf8 35 Rd7** Realigns. White threatens 36 Qxe6, and most queen or knight moves look pawn on f7, f4 or h6. **35... Qe5 36 Qe6** h5 sacrifices material less, but then the b5 pawn runs through. Vintage Kasparov.

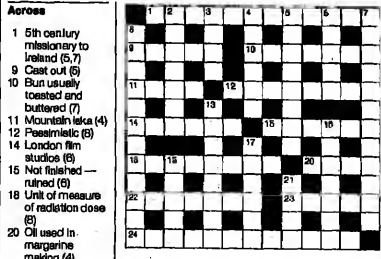
No 2516



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by H von Gottschall, 1926).

No 2516: 1 Nf6 Kf6 2 Kd4 Kf5 3 Kd5 Kf6 4 Qe6 mate.

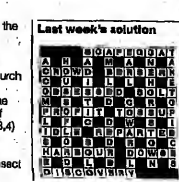
Quick crossword no. 411



Across
1 6th century military unit (5)
2 Cast of (6)
3 Burt usually costumed and outwitted (7)
4 Mountain lake (4)
5 Psalmist (6)
6 London film studios (6)
7 Not finished — turned (6)
8 Unit of measure of radiation dose (6)
9 Oil used in margarine making (4)
10 Distinguished (7)
11 Overweight (7)
12 Lacey (8, 4)

Down
1 Clothing (7)
2 Of no effect (4)
3 Polio/scout unit (6)
4 - (6)
5 - (6)
6 Likaness (6)
7 Understood the procedure (4, 6)
8 Zephyr (6, 6)
9 Curse — church (6)
10 Boing for the extraction of petroleum (3, 4)
11 Fervent (6)
12 Nocturnal insect (4)
13 Zephyr (6, 6)
14 Curse — church (6)
15 Boing for the extraction of petroleum (3, 4)
16 Fervent (6)
17 Nocturnal insect (4)

Last week's solution



Body and soul

CINEMA

Richard Williams

ONLY four people die by violence during the course of Quentin Tarantino's Jackie Brown, a body count that might disappoint some of the director's fans. There isn't much of a splat-factor either. The first victim is dispatched in the distance, hidden from our sight; the second, a woman, dies off screen; and the blood leaking from the other two wouldn't fill an eggcup. After making his name with the stylish, humorous ultra-violence of Reservoir Dogs and Pulp Fiction, Tarantino gives us a surprise: a film in which character is everything.

Few directors can have faced the task of making their third film under such a burden of expectation. Tarantino helped to define a moment in which sensibilities were changing. It is greatly to his credit that he makes meeting the challenge seem like enormous fun.

By choosing to adapt someone else's story, he may appear to have taken the heat off himself. But so thoroughly does he rearrange the bones of Elmore Leonard's Run Punch, a novel about complicated scenes set in the world of minor-league gun-runners, that the film becomes almost as much the director's work as his predecessors were.

Moving the action from Miami to the unfashionable south Los Angeles districts of his childhood enables him to create a pungent authenticity, both on the streets and inside a succession of apartments, bars and shopping malls. And by changing the skin colour of the main character from white to black, he is able to saturate the film with the seventies soul-music sensibility appropriate to the character of Jackie Brown, a flight attendant in her mid-40s.

When we meet Jackie (Pam Grier) in the title sequence, she is striding confidently through the airport terminal to the waiting sound of Bobby Womack's "Across 110th Street". In her shoulder bag is a stack of \$100 bills destined for her friend Ordell (Samuel L. Jackson), who sells guns to criminals and frightened shopkeepers alike.



A film in which character is everything... Pam Grier in the title role of Jackie Brown

Apprehended by a couple of federal agents (Michael Keaton and Michael Brown), Jackie agrees to help entrap Ordell, on the promise of her own freedom. Ordell, meanwhile, engages a veteran bail bondsman, Max (Robert Forster), who secures her release but then finds himself involved in Jackie's ambitious scheme for a triple-cross. On Ordell's side are his girlfriend, the permanently stoned Melaine (Birdie Ford), and his slug-witted accomplice Louis (Robert De Niro), a couple of losers who can't resist the obvious temptation.

By anyone's standards, the central performances are substantial, led by Grier's memorable portrait of a woman confronting middle age. When she enters the shopping mall for the climactic handover of a bag filled with half a million dollars, an endless tracking shot is brilliantly choreographed to the rhythms of the Crusaders' "Street Life"; in her face we see a lifetime's conflict of desire and restraint. Her relationship with the taciturn Max eventually creates an emotional core of surprising tenderness.

Taking the place of physical violence as the film's provocative element is Grier's language. Tarantino is correct to defend the character's incessant use of the term "nigger" on the grounds of idiomatic accuracy, and Jackson delivers the gun-runner's lines with a bulging

energy that survives his gradual removal from the centre of the story. At 154 minutes, Jackie Brown is half an hour too long, and most of the slack is in the dull scenes between Grier and Keaton. Yet, while missing greatness, it makes a convincing reply to the questions raised by Tarantino's earlier achievements. On Ordell's side are his girlfriend, the permanently stoned Melaine (Birdie Ford), and his slug-witted accomplice Louis (Robert De Niro), a couple of losers who can't resist the obvious temptation.

QUIET, SERIOUS films about normal middle-class people facing problems in their emotional lives — why on earth can't the British make them? Conversely, what is it about the French that enables them to turn them out so reliably? Martin Verducci's *Love* etc brings up these familiar questions not only because it exemplifies the French aptitude for the genre, but also because the story is adapted from a novel by an English author.

True, Julian Barnes is the most Francophile of the present generation of British novelists, but the protagonists and the setting of the original novel were British.

Yet the result is a very French film. In part this is because its

two men and a girl, trapped in an infernal triangle — with that of Truffaut's *Jules Et Jim*. To people born, like Barnes, in 1947, this was the film that defined a certain French attitude, something to do with literateness and sophistication. And here we have two 30-year-olds, Benoit (Yvan Attal), a shy young banker, and Pierre (Charles Berling), a charming wastrel, friends since childhood, meeting Marie (Charlotte Gainsbourg), a picture restorer, and getting themselves into a tangle.

Benoit, so reserved that he can't make conversation for fear of being thought boring, replies to Marie's lonely-homesick. They meet, fall in love, get married and move into a chic converted *quintessence*, to which Pierre is a frequent visitor.

But he is circling with an intent that matures into a full-blown obsession as he imposes himself on Marie in person and by telephone. Finally, he takes a room in the hotel opposite, from which to watch her.

I say "watch" rather than "spy on" because voyeurism is never a factor here. This is a story about helplessness in the face of love. So there are the ingredients: bags of charm, good looks, nice clothes, absence of *faux pas*, strong and finely detailed performances, a powerful but unjudgmental moral sense, and a knockout ending. Just another French movie, really.

Storming success

JAZZ

John Fordham

IN HIS 74 years George Russell has produced some of the most audacious music composed in his line-ups or classical/jazz ensembles. His more recent pieces, however, have occasionally seemed rather indulgent in texture and glow to excesses of gaudy lighting. But this made this marathon performance at London's Barbican all the more surprising: it was one of the best shows I have seen in 20 years.

The George Russell Living Trio Orchestra, which at times expanded to a hybrid symphony-jazz band almost 80-strong, was performing a part of the ambitious *Living America* series. But it reached even higher.

In a storm of sound that had almost three hours, the mix of American, British and French music resembled a vast rock'n'roll band, a Moroccan folk ensemble, a symphony band playing a

down, a free-jazz group, a post-crowd of Dixieland street-stomper, a scholarly Schoenbergian tone-outfit whose drinks had been spilled, and plenty more besides. The gig spanned the whole of Russell's career, from the delightfully top-bop melody and swing grooves of his *Flites* String Quartet and the writing, leading line of Alton Rosie, through the minimalist of Vertical Form VI to his current American Trilogy, in which he plays about his lower Arnie Zane of *Aids*, about the fact that he was HIV-positive.

In *SSR* (1984) Jones notoriously explored what it means to be sentenced to an early death, drawing his material from workshops with terminally ill patients. As in many of his works, he used spoken text as a huge video images of the patients, and the show sparked a virulent debate about how far dance could descend into the realm of the "victim art". But the real issue wasn't so much what was or wasn't appropriate to the dance. It was the fact that *SSR* (1984) did, for some of his work, measure up to the challenges of dance in parts, the choreography let an uneasy case of what it had tried and failed to say.

Four years on, however, Jones has shifted emotional gear. He's not such an outsider with "burning breath" more an artist trying to create some "beauty very simple" — and certainly his *Victim Art* was not out of the world.

In France Niemeyer designed the headquarters of the Communist party in Paris (1960) and the cultural centre at Le Havre. Some of his finest work dates from very recently, though the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rio. Current projects here — a never less than busy — include a cultural centre in Barra da Tijuca in Rio.

Pew 20th century architect have been able to build a body of such powerful, highly individual monuments.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 29 1998

Ancient exuberance for local heroes

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

ADAM HART-DAVIS hopes I won't mention this. But look at this way. It's an encouraging insight into how a boy can improve out of all recognition over 40 years. Then again, it just hides me pink.

In 1959 Rupert Hart-Davis (father of Adam) wrote to George Lytton (father of Humphrey): "Adam reports that his boys' maid has got her own television set and he wonders whether the Welfare State hasn't gone a little too far."

This is the very same Adam who brightened up TV on end in Local Heroes (BBC) by peddling and selling up Eton on a folding table. With scattered applause from the late group who are always around to encourage eccentrics. They were there when Eddie the Eagle took off. See you on the lava. You couldn't see your mittens in front of your feet for sulphurous smoke. Hart-Davis replied: "I'm getting a lot closer to the crater now. You can tell

that because there is a lot of steam coming out — owl" (his commentary is often punctuated with owl). "I can't see what I'm going to do because my specs are steamed up." At this point his pea-green jacket vanished into billowing smoke.

Oh, dear. How very like Empedocles who, according to Hart-Davis, took his followers up Etna and said "I am immortal! I am going to prove it! Watch this!" and jumped into the crater.

The experiment, as BBC publicity puts it, straight-faced, "failed." Then again, it didn't. Empedocles lives, OK.

Apart from Empedocles, who died at a sprightly 80, most of the antique scientists Hart-Davis took his followers up Etna and said "I am immortal! I am going to prove it! Watch this!" and jumped into the crater.

The mountain lake colours of the scientists Hart-Davis took his followers up Etna and said "I am immortal! I am going to prove it! Watch this!" and jumped into the crater.

Pythagoras died at 80. Xenophanes at 82. Thinking is clearly good for you. With this proviso: that Pythagoras' theory forbade his followers to peck at their toenail clippings? Or knowing that, could resist having a go?

Handful of dust leap to life at Hart-Davis's touch. He went to Sicily, where Archimedes lived. Archimedes rarely washed, finding it a waste of good thinking time. If forced into a bath, he went on drawing diagrams in the dirt on his skin and in the oil they poured over him. And, of course, he went on thinking. Hence the one thing we all know about Archimedes.

One thing I didn't know is that he is said to have burned an invading fleet by using solar energy. According to legend, he did it with mirrors. "Can he have done it?" fazed Hart-Davis and, catching the Sicilian sun in 96 small mirrors, bounced it back onto a boat. The wood started to scorch. "Two hundred and thirty degrees! That's amazing! Just look at this... owl!"

Television has made a little of the industry lately of cutting off heroes at the knees. Lord Reith, Brendan Powell, Douglas Bader (even though he was already cut off at the knees), "I don't believe," wrote James Thurber about a delinquent dog he owned as a boy, "I ever thought that that dog had a fault." Ian Dury is a bullfinch. This is so unusual it is original.

ARTS 31

Digging at rich seams

THEATRE
Michael Billington

PLAYS often make good movies. Films rarely turn into successful plays. But Mark Herrman's *Brassed Off* works a treat at Sheffield's Crucible, not least because of the vibrant sound of a genuine colliery band.

Paul Allen's stage adaptation sticks very closely to the outline, and much of the dialogue, of the film. We see the painful consequences for a group of South Yorkshire miners of the closure of their local pit, and the desperate last attempt to keep the colliery band intact as a tribute to its dying leader, Danny.

In some respects, Allen has even improved on the original. The romance between Andy, a luckless young miner, and Gloria, the southern exile who returns to her roots and turns out to be employed by the pit management, is sharpened by a post-coital scene in which they discuss their passionate differences. And, in this version, Gloria enlists the help of the militant miners' wives to raise the money to send the band to London's Albert Hall rather than simply writing out a cheque like Lady Hamilton.

Of course, there is a loss as well as gain in the transfer. You miss the actual physical texture of a Yorkshire mining village. Gloria is left to carry out an awkward imaginary argument with the invisible pit management, and Allen's device of presenting the action through the eyes of Danny's grandson places undue strain on his actor.

But overall the event is a great success. It is heartening, in these strained times, to see a regional theatre presenting a story that reflects its own community. And there is something about the authentic sound of brass — and Grimethorpe Colliery Band is one of four groups that will be alternating during the run — that is profoundly moving.

You could argue that underlining Danny's complaints about the band's wobbly sound; but the moment when you hear them, instantly playing in the theatre, they are so much more than a miner's furniture is cruelly repossessed brings alive the story's constant tension between aesthetic aspiration and ugly social reality.

Deborah Payne's production, which will move to the Olivier in London in June, makes excellent use of the Crucible's wide open stage. There is also high drama acting from Peter Armistead as the obsessive Danny, who finally realises that the sound of music cannot compensate for the death of a community from Freya Copeland, who lends Gloria a sharp-edged sensuality as well as playing a mean tuborghorn; and from James Thornton, as her "gilt-ridden lover".

But the strength of the evening lies in the way the play articulates the anger of Yorkshire's communities not just against pit closures but against the erosion of a way of life. The play speaks directly, and very emotionally, to its audience and their response in Sheffield was unequivocal.

Best foot forward

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

BILL T. JONES is a choreographer with ambition and a big heart, and he seems to reject the world that he knows. He is a dancer, a writer, a teacher, a philosopher, a social critic, a religious works hard to tell his audience a lot about his feelings over the years — about being gay, about his lower Arnie Zane of *Aids*, about the fact that he was HIV-positive.

In *SSR* (1984) Jones notoriously explored what it means to be sentenced to an early death, drawing his material from workshops with terminally ill patients. As in many of his works, he used spoken text as a huge video images of the patients, and the show sparked a virulent debate about how far dance could descend into the realm of the "victim art".

But the real issue wasn't so much what was or wasn't appropriate to the dance. It was the fact that *SSR* (1984) did, for some of his work, measure up to the challenges of dance in parts, the choreography let an uneasy case of what it had tried and failed to say.

Four years on, however, Jones has shifted emotional gear. He's not such an outsider with "burning breath" more an artist trying to create some "beauty very simple" — and certainly his *Victim Art* was not out of the world.

In France Niemeyer designed the headquarters of the Communist party in Paris (1960) and the cultural centre at Le Havre. Some of his finest work dates from very recently, though the Museum of Contemporary Art in Rio. Current projects here — a never less than busy — include a cultural centre in Barra da Tijuca in Rio.

Pew 20th century architect have been able to build a body of such powerful, highly individual monuments.

effects in the piece is to make us see his dancers as a figurative travelling community journeying through time decades.

In the first section the Arnie Zane Dance Company move with a capricious, sharp-edged formality that reminds us of the films of Ingmar Bergman. They step with an almost comic precision between formations, occasionally launching into solo routines of larkily acrobatic solo routines. Jones makes no deliberate references, they remind us of Picasso's circus canvases or Massine's *commedia dell'arte* ballets.

In the second section the stage darkens, and the dancers move with a grounded deliberation, shifting gravely in and out of formal alignment. Cage's music is full of contemplative spaces, as if this section represents a significant transition. A huge oval passes slowly across the back of the stage, its delicate, crumpled surface lit like moonlight. It marks a rite of passage, but also recalls, maybe unintentionally, a similar disc that passes through one of Merce Cunningham's greatest works — Cunningham being Cage's collaborator and a definitive choreographer of the mid-century.

The final section opens with the dancers facing an expanse of clear blue light, as if they are standing at the edge of the planet, staring at the new millennium. They seem unable to resolve whether they should be ecstatic or agonised. They gabble silent words and their bodies are edgy and rootless. Yask's music sculpts Wagnerian heights, but their faces freeze into a rictus of alarm.

And even when Jones allows them to relax into an amiable dance, a woman who keeps running in to embrace her partner is repeatedly sucked back off the stage — lost into the past or death.

Finally, the whole cast jive together in a determined stance of hope and unity — except for one man who pursues a solitary, questing dance. It's a choice of how we enter the future together or alone. And, as one of the many fine and resonant images in this piece, it



Moving on... Maya Saffrin and Rosalynne LaPlante in Bill T. Jones's latest work, We Set Out Early

reminds us how gifted Jones is as a crafter of stage pictures. Unfortunately, he's not yet so gifted a crafter of pure dance, and though this piece is certainly his richest and most structured choreography to date, there are still passages of slack. He can do a D and B, and even a little of the sardonic, phrasing in French. He also cannot let us go without some hectoring, and the moments where the

Long overdue accolade for Niemeyer

Jonathan Glancey on the Brazilian architect who has finally been honoured

THE great Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, loved and lionised by young designers, has been awarded the world's most prestigious prize for architecture at the age of 91.

It is amazing that Niemeyer, born in Rio de Janeiro in 1907, has had to wait so long for the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture. Among the British establishment, he appears either to have been forgotten or simply to be out of style and favour.

But he has been recently rediscovered by the young, and particularly by the well-travelling: he has recently built outside Brazil. Niemeyer, a founding member

of the Modern Movement, was the leading disciple of Le Corbusier (1897-1965), with whom he collaborated on the design of the ministry of health and education building in Rio (1936), the Brazilian pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939, and the United Nations building in New York, between 1947 and 1952.

Niemeyer is best known, though, for the monumentally poetic government buildings that he designed for Brasília, the Brazilian capital he masterminded and in effect built with the planner Lucio Costa between 1955 and 1958 under the dynamic presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek, an optimistic expansionist who believed in Brazil's destiny as a major player on the world stage.

The presidential palace, the federal supreme court, and above all the national congress, with its twin towers and twin domes (one inverted), are buildings, once seen, are never forgotten. They owed as much to his monuments of the ancient world for inspiration as they did to the precepts and propaganda of the Modern Movement.

Niemeyer also designed Brasília's cathedral, a swooping concrete structure in the guise of a crown of thorns.

He built his own house in Rio in 1964, on a hillside overlooking the ocean. Where Walter Gropius and other founding fathers of the Modern Movement believed in a functional architecture rooted in an industrial aesthetic and mass-production technology, Niemeyer was



The Brasilia cathedral, in the form of a crown of thorns

always a poet in spirit. His buildings reveal his hand as surely as Gropius tried, vainly, to hide his. "Architecture, as Le Corbusier told me, is invention," he says, "and mine is very personal. It is the search for beauty, the search

for a different form within the miraculous possibilities of technique and functional objectives".

In 1964 Niemeyer went into voluntary exile in Europe after the military coup. The European exile was for the next 31 years during their dictatorship more than 200,000 people were imprisoned, many tortured and killed.

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